Images of Eternal Beauty in Funerary Verse Inscriptions of the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman Periods

ANDRZEJ WYPUSTEK

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By

Andrzej Wypustek

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AE	*L'Année Épigraphique*, Paris 1888–.
AP	W.R. Paton, *Greek Anthology* 1–5, Cambridge, Mass. 1916.
BE	*Bulletin Épigraphique*.
CEG	1: P.A. Hansen, *Carmina epigraphica Graeca saeculorum VIII–V a. Chr. n.* (*CEG 1*), Berlin and New York 1983 (Texte und Kommentare. Eine altertumswissenschaftliche Reihe, 12); 2: P.A. Hansen, *Carmina epigraphica Graeca saeculi IV a. Chr. n.* (*CEG 2*). *Accedunt addenda et corrigenda ad CEG 1*, Berlin and New York 1989 (Texte und Kommentare. Eine altertumswissenschaftliche Reihe, 15).
CGF	G. Kaibel, 1899. *Comicorum Graecorum fragmenta. Voluminis I fasciculus prior. Doriensium comoedia mimi phlyaces*, Berlin (2nd edition with addenda by K. Latte Berlin 1958, reprinted 1975).
CIG	*Corpus inscriptionum Graecarum*, Berolini 1828–1877.
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, Berlin 1863–1959.
CIRB	V.V. Struve, *Corpus Inscriptionum Regni Bosporani*, Moskwa and Leningrad 1965.
CLE	F. Bücheler, *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* 1–2, Leipzig 1895–1897; E. Lommatzsch, *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* 3 (*Supplementum* to *CLE*), Leipzig 1926 (reprinted Amsterdam 1972).
EBGR	A. Chaniotis, *Epigraphic Bulletin for Greek Religion*, *Kernos* 1991–.
FGH	F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* 1–3, Berlin 1923–1958.
IG	*Inscriptiones Graecae*, Berlin 1873–.
IGLS	*Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*, Beirut 1929–.
IGRR	R. Cagnat, V. Henry, G. Lafaye and J. Toutain, *Inscriptiones graecae ad res romanas pertinentes* 1–4, Paris 1901–1927 (reprinted Chicago 1975).
IGUR	L. Moretti, *Inscriptiones Graecae Urbis Romae* 1–4, Rome 1968–1990 (Studi pubblicati dall'Istituto Italiano per la Storia Antica, 17, 22, 28, 47).
IK	*Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien*, Bonn 1972–.
ILS	H. Dessau, *Inscriptiones latinae selectae* 1–3 (in 5 parts), Berlin 1892–1916.
Kaibel EG	G. Kaibel, *Epigrammata Graeca ex lapidibus conlecta*, Berlin 1878 (reprinted Hildesheim 1965, with the supplement, G. Kaibel, 'Supplementum epigrammatum Graecorum ex lapidibus conlectorum', *RhM* 34 [1879], 181–213).
LSJ	H.G. Liddell, R. Scott, H.S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon. Ninth Edition with Revised Supplement*, Oxford 1996.
MAMA	W.M. Calder, et al., *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua* 1–8, Manchester 1928–1962 (Publications of the American Society for

	Archaeological Research in Asia Minor) and vol. 9–10, B. Levick, et al., London 1988–1993 (Journal of Roman Studies Monographs, 4 and 7).
PCG	R. Kassel, C.F.L. Austin, *Poetae Comici Graeci* 1–, Berlin and New York 1983–2001.
Peek GV	W. Peek, *Griechische Vers-Inschriften. I. Grab-Epigramme*, Berlin 1955 (reprinted Chicago 1988).
PG	J.P. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*, Paris 1857–1866.
PGM	K. Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae. Die griechischen Zauberpapyri* 1–2 (A. Henrichs [ed.]), Stuttgart 1973–1974 (2nd, revised edition of 1928–1941 original edition).
Roscher, *Lexikon*	H.W. Roscher (ed.), *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie* 1–6, Leipzig 1884–1937 (reprinted Hildesheim 1965, 1992–1993).
SEG	*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, Leiden 1923–.
SGO	R. Merkelbach, J. Stauber, *Steinepigramme aus dem Griechischen Osten* 1–5, Stuttgart, Munich and Leipzig 1998–2004.
TAM	*Tituli Asiae Minoris*, Vienna 1901–.
TGF	A. Nauck, *Tragicorum graecorum fragmenta*, Leipzig 1889 (2nd edition of 1856 original edition; reprinted Heidelsheim, 1964, with the supplement by B. Snell).
ThesCRA	J.C. Balty, J. Boardman, et al., *Thesaurus Cultus et Rituum Antiquorum* 1–8, Los Angeles 2004–2012.
TrGF	B. Snell, R. Kannicht, S. Radt, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* 1–5, Göttingen 1971–2004.

ILLUSTRATIONS AND CREDITS

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INTRODUCTION

> I have heard of the beauty of the dead: it existed in none that I have seen.
>
> Letitia Elizabeth Landon, a Romantic poet (1802–1838)

Greek funerary epigrams are an important historical source in the study of antiquity. For historians of literature and philologists they constitute tiny works of ancient Greek literature. For other historians they are a unique source of information on various aspects of life in ancient Greece, changes in mentality, social and family relationships, the cult of the dead, Hellenisation and urbanisation, and even military techniques as well as monetisation in rural regions of the Roman Empire. Historians of ideas and of religions are in turn interested in how epigrams express mythological motifs, ideas and rituals. Simply put, funerary epigrams interest specialists in diverse aspects of ancient history. Their exceptional value has been identified by scholars as authoritative as J. and L. Robert, who have stressed that poetic epigrams always try to say much more, unlike epitaphs written in prose, which only occasionally contain in-depth information or more extensive narrative.[1] The latter are usually just a series of impersonal pieces of data important to those studying demographics, onomastics and social changes in ancient times.

Funerary epigrams constituted only a small part of tombstone inscriptions, most of which were written in prose. Of the tens of thousands of extant ancient epitaphs, barely a few thousand were written in verse.[2] They are therefore, in a sense, elite among tombstone inscriptions. The composition of a proper epitaph (not even necessarily in verse) required some financial input and a minimal level of education. Moreover, the purchase of even the plainest tombstone was a major investment. The poor or those who were just not well-off, i.e. the majority of the population, were simply buried beneath an unmarked mound of earth or a less durable monument of wood or terracotta. Yet even these social restrictions do not alter the fact that, especially

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[1] *BE* 1952, no. 31, in their critical review of the important study by Tod (1951).

[2] Robert 1961, 67, tentatively puts the number as 5 thousand. Wallace 1972, 204, assumes that something like 4,500 funerary verse-inscriptions exist. New findings included, the number will probably reach 5–6 thousand.

starting in Hellenistic times, the quality of epigrams varied greatly. Among them we find pieces which on account of their poor rhythmic structure, abundant stylistic mistakes, hapless platitudes and poetic clichés were obviously written by people with virtually no literary refinement, while at the other extreme there are also examples of sublime, exquisitely composed poetry, alluding to the very greatest literature of the age, including that of Sappho, Homer, the tragedians and elegiacs. While during the Archaic Period in Greece only a small group of aristocrats could afford an inscribed stele, by the late 5th century and in the 4th century BC this situation changed with the social and economic advancement of non-aristocratic circles, as a result of which steles were virtually produced on an 'industrial scale.'[3] Unlike literary sources, whose authors originated predominantly from the upper echelons of society, in the Classical period the authors of funerary poetry came not infrequently from outside the urban and rural aristocracies.[4] In this sense epigrams, despite their inherent elitism, occasionally represent broader sections of the population.[5] They allow us to study social groups which are normally ignored in ancient sources, including: women, children, slaves and freed slaves.

Epigrams therefore constitute a reflection of the civilisation that gave birth to them and of that civilisation's diverse transformations. Their particular value is in the insight they give us into what Greeks thought of the afterlife; that is, the opinions of people from beyond the narrow circle of ancient philosophers, theologians and writers whose thoughts are known to us either through their own writings or that of their students. Here we are confronted with an entire spectrum of views held by regular people who did not belong to philosophical schools or religious groupings nor were initiated in the mysteries. Above all we are interested in epigrams from the Hellenistic and Roman Empire periods, as in many respects these constitute a distinct category, quite different from earlier epochs. In contrast to those in the Archaic and Classical eras, these epigrams are not only much more numerous and of greater length but also to a greater extent individualised. While the epigrams of earlier periods more often than not simply praised

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[3] Richter 1961, 1; Wallace 1970.

[4] Strubbe 1998, 46, referring to Vérilhac 1978(2), 410–411. Such assumption should be accepted with some reservations, due to the small number of inscriptions originating in the rural parts of Empire, see Robert 1957, 18; Robert 1958b, 54; Robert 1940–1965(11–12), 325; Robert 1967a, 284; see also *SEG*(43), no. 911.

[5] Alexiou 2002, 107. One cannot, however, overstate the case: pro Nielsen et al. 1989, contra Oliver 2000.

the departed, wishing to commemorate them in the most honourable way, and while later there was also an increasing tendency to express despair and protest against such a terrible loss, in the Hellenistic and Roman Empire periods quite new themes emerged: numerous allusions to mythology, invocations to the gods as well as diverse ideas of life after death. Moreover, various consolatory themes emerged, and with them diverse moral and philosophical reflections onlife and death. While epigrams continued to be written in a mood that was lofty and full of pathos, they were now also interested in the individual, in their biographies and the everyday aspects of their lives. In other words, they were not only concerned with immortalising the deceased's virtues.

The study of Hellenistic-Roman funerary epigrams has a long-standing tradition and covers multi-faceted trends and directions. The greatest focus was, however, usually on a relatively limited and late category of epigrams reflecting positive concepts of death and afterlife, in contrast to the prevailing mood of the bulk of the epigrams.[6] Of such studies mine is just one more, following the well-treaded path and being still limited in scope to the study of a rather marginal category of verse inscriptions. Clearly, this seemingly conventional approach calls for some explanation. So far scholars examining the positive eschatological ideas in epigrams have concentrated on the various aspects of life after death, above all various visions of the land of eternal happiness and their possible associations with mystery cults. The few epigrams of this sort have usually aroused considerable interest (even beyond the narrow circle of epigraphists) and have been relatively well researched, especially as far as the association of themes and ideas with particular religious movements is concerned. My objective, however, is to examine those epigrams which while presenting some kind of a positive eschatology provide us with reasonably concrete information on the posthumous status of the deceased with regard to the gods but do not reflect the specific doctrines of any particular group of believers. On such tombstones life after death is most usually represented by the idea of the deceased ascending to the stars or into the Ether, as well as various forms of heroisation. Less frequently, there is mention of other ways in which the dead

[6] It is therefore hardly surprising that in recent decades scholars of ancient history have devoted a great deal of attention to funerary verse-inscriptions as a source of information on ancient attitudes to death, ideas of the afterlife, relations between the living and the dead as well as various aspects of ancient funerary rituals. The *Epigraphic Bulletin of Greek Religion* (*EBGR*), which has been published for some years now in *Kernos*, focuses on epigraphy, including epigrams, as a basic source for research into ancient religion.

were elevated or redeemed. The subjects of this monograph are the specific ideas regarding the 'special' dead in Greek epigrams of the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman periods, particularly in the Roman Empire of the 1st–3rd centuries AD. A common feature of the deceased presented in this group is their 'higher' status and exceptional relationship with the gods, from direct association with the gods, through heroisation to the attributing of divine protection. This category formed a kind of 'hierarchy.' It is my intention to examine the specific context in which particular ideas concerning the afterlife of these deceased were propagated. The next step will be to establish whether, despite the diversity, there are any common themes among these epigrams and, if so, decide what conclusions may be drawn to help us better understand how the ancient Greeks imagined the afterlife and their attitude towards the deceased. This in turn will allow for a critical appraisal of current theories regarding the religious and mythological beliefs expressed in such epigrams, i.e. theories which affect the analysis of eschatological motifs in Greek funerary poetry in general.[7]

[7] All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.

CHAPTER ONE

ESCHATOLOGICAL THEMES IN EPIGRAMS

Alternative Possibilities about the Status of Dead

The purpose of this preliminary section is to provide the reader with a critical outline of the previous and current research of eschatological motifs in Greek verse-inscriptions. Apart from the brief discussion of recent developments concerning primary source material, the main objective will be to investigate the context of the image of the dead as beings who have been raised to a higher state. I will gradually develop and formulate the concept of 'consciously formulaic' verse-inscriptions. In my opinion taking this substantial category of epigrams into consideration may allow us to go beyond the limits of the long-established tradition of the scholarly study of 'eschatological' epigrams, which focused mainly on eschatological concepts related to mysteries. As a result, the characterisation of selection of testimonies that deserve further scrutiny will be presented, thus giving a the perspective for the subsequent sections of the book focusing on their different aspects.

Sporadic references to visions of the afterlife appear on epigrams only towards the end of the Archaic Period, whereas they start becoming noticeably more widespread towards the end of the 5th century BC.[1] They are at their most numerous in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The majority are found in Asia Minor; many also originate from Egypt and Italy, whereas they are relatively few in Greece. However, even in the Greco-Roman period epigrams with a clearly eschatological message are rare. Only very few present a specific view of immorality. Such eschatological statements were diversely expressed, but they usually stated an undefined conviction that after death, on account of their services or virtues, the souls of the deceased would exist in a land of eternal happiness among the heroes or gods.[2] There was also

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1 Verse-inscriptions on tombstones from the Archaic Period chiefly concentrated on commemorating the deceased's temporal fame and glory, and did not include eschatological themes, Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 173.

2 Kaufman 1897; Siegel 1967; Kubusch 1973; Ehrengut 1979.

mention of privileged places of happiness in other worlds for the chosen ones (εὐσεβέων εἰς χῶρον or δόμον, οἶκον, θάλαμον, λειμῶνα).[3] Sometimes these places were associated with the Isles of the Blessed or the Elysian Fields, but such concepts—dating back to the days of Homer and Hesiod—were never precisely defined. The deceased frequently entered into the Ether and the stars. There were suggestions that the privileged status of some of the dead, named variously as μάκαρες, εὐδαίμονες or ὄλβιοι, meant that their souls went to a land of eternal happiness where they would exist, freed of any concerns, difficulties or illnesses. Some of the epitaphs assumed that immortality would be achieved on Mount Olympus, or that souls would be somehow rewarded in another world for temporal virtues and good deeds.

Nevertheless, we rarely find any more exact indications as to the status of those who were in such a way posthumously ennobled. All the epitaphs say is that the deceased joined the ranks of the gods, heroes or the 'blessed ones,' or that they ascended to a variously described land of eternal happiness. The few more-specifically defined cases of the ascension of the deceased took on various forms which, with some simplification, can be divided into two basic categories. Firstly, through deification, i.e. by associating the deceased with divine elements or divine attributes. Secondly, by referring to the ancient concept of the hero and in various ways heroising the deceased.

All this raises the question: how could the traditional, pessimistic concept of the dead descending into the underworld—which was predominant in epitaphs and epigrams—coexist with the occasionally expressed belief that people endowed with special virtues enjoyed an afterlife of eternal happiness? It seems that such a developed, optimistic eschatology contradicted the traditional view among ordinary Greeks of a miserable existence of the dead in Hades. After all, Homer's heroes are presented as virtual demigods in their lifetime but not after their death. For the bulk of the epigrams such was a prevailing mood. The fact that the epithets εὐσεβεῖς, μάκαρες and ἥρωες were not applied to all the deceased, but only to some of them, and that on some tombstones virtues and achievements (ἀρετή, σωφροσύνη, σοφία) were presented as a prerequisite for the deceased's ascension or heroisation, implies that, after death, the fate of a chosen few differed from the fate of ordinary mortals. This in turn implies that for the

[3] Drew-Bear 1975, 290, n. 22. There were many possible variants of the name, see Dickie 2005, 32–34. For the recent general discussion of the afterlife in the inscribed funerary epigrams, Chaniotis 2000.

average mortal the prospect of life after death was not certain and required certain conditions for it to exist.[4]

Scholarly Debate

So how can we explain the coexistence of two such contradictory concepts? Some scholars have tried to downplay the importance of references to a happy afterlife, assuming that these were ideas that failed to gain popular acceptance among the Greeks and never managed to dislodge the greyer and more 'democratic' view of Hades. Supporters of this opinion claim the coexistence of two quite different attitudes was possible because the Greeks had partly adopted eschatological ideas of pre-Greek cultures and peoples, especially the Minoans or Egyptians, or alternatively nations with whom they had neighboured for centuries, such as the Thracians or peoples of the Near East. It was from there that the Greeks were to have acquired the fundamental concept of Elysium. Among those presenting alternative theories is J. Bremmer, who argues that epigrams of this sort were nearly always associated to a greater or lesser extent with mystery cults.[5] Supporters of this theory are of the opinion that more elaborate descriptions of the afterlife on tombstones were rare because these were ideas confined to closed groups. They were the preserve of philosophers (the Platonists) or the followers of specific religious doctrines (Orphic and Pythagorean as well as mystery and Dionysiac cults), and as such these ideas were not passed on to the broader public.[6]

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4 Engemann 1973, 47. One should note that here there was no simple application of aristocratic principles, and accordingly there was no equality with regard to people's fates after death as there was no equality among people at birth. Social status was not the deciding factor. Temporal social hierarchy was not transferred to the other world as it was in, for example, Ancient Egypt, ruled for many centuries in the Old Kingdom by pharaohs and priests. The Greeks, by contrast, saw nothing improper for a seller of perfumes to ascend to the Ether after death, and a slave could enjoy eternal happiness feasting with the heroes and gods. See e.g. *Peek GV*, no. 1887; Bernand 1969, no. 27 and *IGUR*(3), no. 1252, with pertinent comments by Peres 2003, 224–225; some other examples Gutscher 1890(2), 20–23. At the other end of the social ladder a deceased aristocrat could (according to a clear declaration on his tombstone) expect the gloomy prospect of Hades. This is an interesting aspect of Greek funerary poetry. The lavishness of funerals and monuments varied greatly, but the 'metaphysical' status of the deceased after death, as expressed in epigrams, was to a very large extent independent of their earthly social status.

5 Bremer 1994, 115; see also Lattimore 1942, 146.

6 What might cast some doubt on this explanation is the fact that the few extant tombstones of believers in life after death remain silent as to the mysteries in which they had been

Of a quite different opinion are those scholars who believe that at a certain point a radical change occurred in the mentality of the Greeks, who to an ever greater degree were inclined to believe humans would be brought back to life after death in some kind o paradise.[7] While in Homer's time the notion that a select few (Menelaus and the Dioscuri) would enjoy a happy existence after death was not considered especially important, with time it took on a far greater significance. Literary sources, however, were limited to a narrow contemporary readership and did not equally document all epochs, which does not make them a reliable means of tracing changes in Greek views of the afterlife. Thus there are differences of opinion. We do not know in which epoch references to Elysium and its equivalents became more widespread. Did attitudes change in the 8th century BC (which according to some scholars was when the hero cult first appeared[8])? Was it in the 5th century? Or perhaps it never happened before the Hellenistic period?

A general consensus of scholarly opinion on the subject is, however, in favour of scepticism. The weakness of any theories relating to ancient attitudes towards afterlife, based on the study of verse-inscriptions, is that each of their fundamental premises may be faulted with argumentum ex silentio. Suffice to say that worshippers of Dionysus, who believed in a happy afterlife, left hardly any traces of their beliefs on funerary epigrams. Similarly, ancient Christian epitaphs rarely expressed faith in the resurrection, despite the fact that from the very outset this was a fundamental belief of the Christian faith.[9] Epitaphs were to only include what was considered most important and most worthy of commemoration. The life stories of the dead were not recounted, nor were their spiritual histories. Thus the small number of references to the afterlife does not necessarily have to result from doubts or a lack of faith. Simply put, the writing of epitaphs was limited by space, and thus only the most basic facts were mentioned, including the names of the deceased, the parents or perhaps the hometown. That is why quasi-statistics

initiated, quite in contrast to the so-called Orphic tablets (mostly originating from Crete, Italy and Thessaly of the 4th and 5th centuries BC), which included special formulas for the journey to the afterlife. This paradox may be explained by the need to keep secret the mysteries and rituals. On the outside, tombstones were exposed for the public to see, while the formulas on the tablets inside were intended solely for the deceased and the gods receiving them to the other world. See Cole 1984. For the mystery cults (Pythagorean, Dionysiac, and Orphic) as reflected in verse inscriptions, Rohde 1925, 542–543; Cole 1993; Betz 1998, 400, n. 7; Chaniotis 2000, 177, n. 19; Le Bris 2001, 68–71; Dickie 2005.

[7] Bremmer 1994, 96; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 38–39.

[8] Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 52.

[9] Nilsson 1955–1961(2), 220–221; Kajanto 1978; Pfohl 1983, 507.

or quantifications applied by some to epigrams expressing a positive view of the fate of soul of the deceased have a relative value.[10] Likewise, there are no grounds for an overly optimistic methodological approach.[11]

Accordingly, most scholars admit that in fact it is very difficult for us to reconstruct ancient views of life beyond death let alone outline the evolution of these views. Our sources—even leaving to one side funerary epigrams—provide very little information on the subject, and none too consistent information at that. We are not in a position to determine whether with regard to the question of their ultimate fate the ancient Greeks were fatalistic or indifferent, or whether to a greater or lesser extent belief in an afterlife of happiness was common. Perhaps it is, as many scholars maintain, that a given attitude depended on the historic occasion and the specific individual concerned. With time, particularly in the Greco-Roman era, many Greeks came to regard Elysium as a place not only reserved for gods and heroes, but also as a possible destination for ordinary mortals, granted as a reward for a faultless life or as a result of some initiations into mysteries. Still, the fact is that by studying Greek funerary poetry one cannot simply divide epitaphs into separate types, one positioning hope in salvation and the other denying it. The fact that in this respect there were such great differences does not allow us to conclude (as is also suggested by editors who categorise epigrams according to their themes) that there was a deep division in ancient attitudes to life after death: a vast majority of pessimists on one side and a handful of optimists on the other. In such matters the opinions of individuals and social groups frequently changed, while hope and scepticism could easily coexist in the conscience of the same individual. Some scholars have even stated that the spiritual condition of the ancient Greeks was not far removed from the condition of most of modern, post-Christian society in Western Europe, where people typically combine the rationalist notion that total loss of consciousness marks the end of a person's existence with an undefined hope of life after death.[12] After all, the vast majority of people had no definite views or convictions regarding eschatological matters. The Christian tradition has accustomed us to associate religiosity or eschatology

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[10] See Festugière 1932, 143–160. This is clearly recognisable in Hoffmann 1978, 26–57 (notabene the list of the epigrams on p. 45), and with regard to Christian epitaphs Dresken-Weiland 2006. For the problems presented by statistical estimation, see *SEG*(50), no. 1750 and ibidem 51, no. 2291, in discussion of the study by Le Bris 2001.

[11] In his time C.M. Kaufman even tried to use epigrams as a means of presenting the chronological development of Greek and Roman beliefs in the afterlife, Kaufman 1897, 21–22, 70–81.

[12] Zanker, Ewald 2004, 113–115.

with dogmatic rigour. In Greco-Roman antiquity defined views of life after death were of little importance in the cults of gods, the only exception being certain mystery cults. It was an essentially alien concept to Greeks.[13] Unlike the Christian attitude to stories in the Bible, they did not feel obliged to fully believe their myths and could therefore sometimes accept two evidently contradictory possibilities. Indeed, there were also those who, as Plutarch reports, were overcoming the fear of death with the fear of Cerberus.[14] At the over extreme there were some people who simply did not believe in anything:

> [...] everyone who died is shade and soil. Nothingness again returns to nothingness.[15]
>
> [...] κατθανὼν δὲ πᾶς ἀνὴρ γῆ καὶ σκιά· τὸ μηδὲν εἰς οὐδὲν ῥέπει.

Everyone knew a specific, traditional, mythological explanation, but even a 'pious' Greek felt no certainty regarding the afterlife. This lack of orthodoxy did not trouble people's minds. In this respect a diversity of stances, speculations and beliefs was quite permissible, and well reflected in epitaphs. There was Hades, but there were also the Islands of the Blessed, Elysium or alternatively the dead were transformed into stars. On one and the same tombstone we may sometimes find a combination of contradicting views, and thus in this respect epigrams in their entirety constitute a spectrum ranging from 'optimism' to 'pessimism.'[16]

Modes and Means of Production

A fundamental idea that is a recurrent element in the contemporary treatment of ancient funerary poetry is based on a forthright argument: one should accept that epigrams do not constitute a valid testimony regard-

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[13] Kurtz, Boardman 1971, 239; Bremmer 1983, 80–82; Garland 1985, 158–159; Peifer 1989, 74–75, n. 180. Some scholars explain such inconsistencies by pointing to the distant, diverse traditions on which the Greek religion was based on, see Gardner 1896, 25–26 and 44–45. Others underscore the problematic nature of the subject as stated, falling outside human, rational or logical, categories, see Vermeule 1979, 28–32 and 118–119.

[14] Plutarch, *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum* 27. In Lucian's *De luctu* 2 the pagan masses are said to picture the afterlife as the vast, dark, gloomy Hades, as it had already been presented by Homer and Hesiod. See the recent short survey of the ancient Greek concepts of eschatology by Parker 2005, 363–368.

[15] Euripides, fr. 532 *TGF* = *TrGF* 5.1. See also Garland 1985, 74–76.

[16] Differing, or even contradictory views concerning the ultimate question could be held even by members of the same cult, see e.g. the followers of Dionysos, Cole 1984.

ing the deceased or the 'beliefs' of their kinfolk. After all, this was poetry.[17] Particularly in the Greco-Roman period a great number of epigrams were very similar to each other, especially in terms of conventional themes and phrases (e.g. in praising the 'modesty' of a deceased spouse), which suggests that these were readymade, virtually mass produced inscriptions. Not infrequently spaces were left for the deceased's name to be inserted. The repetitiveness and consistency of forms means that use must have been made of set formulas or even collections of similar texts which purchasers (often illiterate and/or lacking inspiration, or preferring to adhere to a tradition) could select at the workshop of the engraver or stonemason. It is probable that anthologies of epigrams were circulated from which people could choose texts and models. Therefore the content of epigrams usually included standard, often previously prepared compositions, similar to how tombstone reliefs were prepared. They were composed by anonymous *literati*, local teachers, or the 'assistants' of stonemasons.[18] The inscriptions themselves, on account of the normally high costs of acquiring, cutting and transporting a stone slab, were usually carried out by professional and experienced engravers who thus produced considerable numbers of various types of inscriptions and could easily duplicate the simpler terms and concepts. Hence, to a greater or lesser extent, a random repetition of standard phrases came into play, not infrequently without any personal intervention from the purchasers.[19] It is a generally held view that the inscriptions were

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17 Inge 1918, 51–52, following Guthrie 1951, 260.

18 Lattimore 1942, 17–20. Some notable series of similar texts: Robert 1940–1965(11–12), 323–324, n. 7; Thimme 1967, 203, n. 20; Drew-Bear 1979; Sartre-Fauriat 1998, 219; *SEG*(48), 1914; Sartre-Fauriat 2001(2), 202–203. The broad circulation of epigrammatic models is discussed by Wallace 1970, 97 and Lorenz 1980, see *SEG*(30), no. 528. According to Friedländer, Hoffleit 1948, in their commentary to the epigram from Thessaly (5–4th century BC), no. 137 = *Peek GV*, no. 217; *CEG*(1), no. 117, the similarities of this kind between various inscriptions originating from Attica and Argos suggest some kind of 'internalisation' of the epigrammatic poetry.

19 The question of possible, specialised epigrammatic anthologies/handbooks is debated; pro Guarducci 1967–1978(3), 156; Tsagalis 2008, 52–61; contra Alexiou 2002, 107 and 226, n. 16 with references; Dickie 2005. The authors of funerary epigrams themselves elude us as a professional or social category. If we assume, as Bowie 1989b does, that they were in fact professionals, producing commissioned dedicatory epigrams and various poems on the occasion of games and festivities, e.g. κῐθᾰρῳδία (of the kind that the famous hymn for Antinous from Kourion was), they could be regarded as a specific, mobile, specialised group of 'contractors'. A quite different perspective may, however, also be feasible. To Drew-Bear 1979 they consisted of local, rather inept 'village schoolmasters.' His hypothesis has its limitations. Firstly, we do not have extant school exercises of this sort, see Wißmann 2002; secondly, a number of testimonies point, as already suggested, to the 'internalisation' of funerary poetry. Thus, we are probably dealing with two opposite ends of a continuum.

copied from papyrus texts; additionally short and simple texts could have been dictated from memory.[20] To be sure, one should note that the concepts were rarely repeated word for word. Moreover, insofar as time, place and the social status of the deceased were concerned, conventions and concepts differed considerably.[21] While the authors and producers of epigrams cited, plagiarised or imitated the works of others, these groups also included some real poets among them. Some of the epitaphs are considered to be among the finest treasures of Greek poetry.[22] But in this sense funerary epigrams were simply a reflection of one of the fundamental principles of 'high' Greek literature: *imitatio cum variatione*. *Ars imitandi* bordering on 'plagiarism' was most certainly acceptable, and occasionally even considered in good taste.[23]

One way or another the writers of funerary poetry borrowed copiously from all available or more or less well remembered literature. The rather bland, mass produced and soulless embellishments were of their authorship.[24] It is therefore difficult to clearly distinguish between literary convention, poetic expression, the following of specific forms or metres and, for example, an attempt to express the deceased's personality or his/her personal convictions.[25] Moreover, we cannot distinguish individual observations from more common ideas, or pure poetry from genuine expres-

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[20] Nevertheless, in ancient literature there is absolutely no mention of such readymade texts. After all, the similarities between epigrams may not have necessarily been the result of copying from the same master copy. The repetition of traditional phrases and duplication of notions may equally well have resulted from a conscious decision to show restraint and discretion rather than excessive emotion, Lattimore 1942, 17.

[21] Byers 1998, 10. Kazazis 1996–1997 presented the classification of funerary epigrams into the 'subliterary' (those that are conventional, standard, to be situated somewhere between *carmina poetarum* and *carmina popularia*) and 'pre-literary' (original, innovatory, refined, close to the category of pure 'literary funerary epigram'). See also Pfohl 1954–1955; Pfohl 1970; Montes Cala 1991.

[22] W. Peek went so far as to state that in Hellenistic times a kind of Greek *koine* for funerary poetry was developed with its own world of ideas, themes, forms and concepts. See Peek 1960, 34. This is the conceptual framework for the 'Toposforschung' of funerary epigrams, with its two most important representatives, Lattimore 1942 and Vérilhac 1978; as the producer of the single most important edition of the verse inscriptions, W. Peek has taken a similar stand. His approach was radically different from that of L. Robert, who constantly stressed the local features of the inscriptional evidence, including funerary epigrams, with their various styles, motifs, and realities.

[23] Wallace 1970, 96–97; Chamoux 1996; Avram 1999.

[24] Sometimes in their 'creativity' they were inspired by the poetic conventions, a style that we cannot always identify or notice, see e.g. Herrmann 1995, 192–193.

[25] E.g. in one of the epigrams, the second word in the formula ὥρισεν ἡρώεσσιν was used only for the effect of phonetic similarity, *SGO*(1), no. 04/12 / 09; Le Bris 2001, 63–64.

sions of faith.[26] Epigrams did not necessarily express what people really felt and thought; sincere feelings and individual points of view were inevitably replaced by convention and literary fashion. Then again the texts must certainly have been influenced not only by conventions of the genre, but also by current fashion, taste and local colour. In Hellenistic times epigrams which included more developed religious and eschatological terms and concepts, conventionally, stereotypically and rhetorically increasingly referred to subjects, such as: the house of Hades and Persephone, the waters of Acheron and Tartarus, the Land of the Dead, the Land of the Blessed, the chambers of Persephone and of Tartarus, the Isles of the Blessed, the Elysian Fields and the Asphodel Meadows. At every possible occasion the holiness of the tomb was emphasised and the deceased was depicted as a devout and blessed individual. Occasionally inscriptions also included cautionary statements regarding possible punishments or rewards awaiting the deceased in the afterlife. More often than not these statements originated from the canon of Greek literature and expressed the author's education (and that of his 'client') rather than their own heartfelt eschatological beliefs.[27]

Those studying inscriptions are fully aware of all these problems and have undertaken to overcome them. One of the least successful efforts was a simple thesis presented by M.N. Tod—the author of an excellent, now even classic (despite the scathing criticism from J. and L. Robert) study of terminology used in reference to the deceased in prose-written epitaphs.[28] Tombs were situated in public places where they could be seen and their inscriptions read by all members of society. Therefore anyone who presented a tombstone inscription that was evidently false or exaggerated risked exposing themselves to ridicule, and so de facto also harmed the way in which the deceased would be remembered. Thus, according to Tod, methodological objections to using tomb inscriptions as a valid historical source were quite unfounded. This opinion is debatable, to say the least; it begs belief that such a careful reader of epitaphs, as Tod truly was, could make such a suggestion which borders on naivety. One can give countless examples of the dead being excessively praised, quite unscrupulously, without any sense of realism or plausibility.[29]

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26 Armstrong 1987, 2–12; Kosmopoulou 1998, 542.
27 Schneider 1969, 220; Fabricius 1999, 75.
28 Tod 1951, 184.
29 E.g. Lattimore 1942, 285–288, 290–295.

A virtually contradictory position, assuming all possible restrictions on this type of historical source, was taken by A. Chaniotis in his general analysis of all eschatological views expressed in funerary epigrams. In his opinion, on account of their nature, above all their stereotypical nature, epigrams could not be used as an objective source of information on the beliefs of the persons buried, members of their families that commissioned the epigrams or even the authors/poets themselves. Chaniotis instead proposes a very rigorous form of selection: only in the case when an epigram explicitly links hopes of life after death with stated virtues, religious practice or philosophical convictions of the deceased can we, to a certain extent, treat it as reflecting personal views.[30]

Tod and Chaniotis took up stances at opposite extremes. Tod seems to have been too trustful of epigrams as a historical source, whereas Chaniotis has a healthy critical attitude in this regard. Now we shall try to undertake a review of, or rather more accurately, define Chaniotis' decidedly cautious, but essentially correct, stance, based on his assumption that each time one has to scrutinise the context of the epigrams. Without this, it is impossible to make an assessment of the texts.

Varieties of Experience, Pluralities of Perspectives

The following short survey will be useful to exemplify different types of epigrams as our potential sources. Certainly, one has to appreciate the fact that being subject to certain popular conventions or even outright plagiarism does not necessarily rule out the possibility genuine feelings. Even today, if on a contemporary tombstone we see the words 'Beloved Father/Beloved Mother' and those words are repeated on thousands of other tombstones, this certainly does not mean the expressed emotion is insincere, let alone nonexistent. In other words, set phrases may appear and become very popular simply because they express a universal, human experience, or a traditional or new culture.[31] Set phrases repeated in dozens of epigrams in

30 Chaniotis 2000, 162–163 and some examples 175, n. 8. Even if by and large we accept Chaniotis' criteria, some cases may leave us hesitant, e.g. the epigram for the poet Philiskos of Korkyra (3rd century BC), who was also a priest of Dionysius; his epitaph seems to reflect eschatological hopes originating in some kind of initiation, see Page 1941, no. 106; Lloyd-Jones, Parsons 1983, no. 980; *EBGR* 1992, no. 128; Dickie 1995; Rossi 1996; Dickie 1998; Dignas 2003; Parker, Stamatopoulou 2004, 9 and 12; Dickie 2005; Fantuzzi 2007; Torjussen 2008, 73–78; Santamaría Álvarez 2010.

31 Van der Horst 1991, 61–62.

W. Peek's collection do actually express something; even the frequency with which particular ideas or themes appear is somehow significant. Although the reading of funerary epigrams is also the subject of scholarly debate, it cannot be denied that, unlike the sacred mystery books or philosophical scripts, funerary inscriptions were presented to the public for all to read. Thus they could contribute to the spreading of certain ideas or presenting ideas that were little known elsewhere. Naturally, it is hard to imagine that the reading of tombstones was a regular form of recreation or that they attracted the mass gatherings occurring during games or religious festivals. But epigrams do demonstrate that in ancient Greece people not belonging to any intellectual elite could create, read and appreciate poetry.[32]

As valuable as these typical conventional gravestones (expressing ideas known not only in narrow, elite circles), are the few original, individualistic epigrams, rich in content and expressing well-defined convictions at odds with conventional sentiments. Personal accents on epigrams were possible when a better or more personally involved versifier was employed.[33] All the more so, because frequently no effort was spared to fittingly honour the deceased, e.g. in the matter of transporting the body.[34] Hence some Greek tombs have a very individual character because of the biographical or autobiographical nature of their inscriptions, or because they refer to the personal virtues or experiences of the deceased. Some texts were written by people who were very close to the deceased.[35] In some cases one even has the impression of the author's direct, spiritual and emotional confrontation with death and transience of life; not on the basis of literature but on the basis of personal experience.[36] A few examples will suffice. The following epigram appears on a 3rd/4th-century stele from a cemetery in the town of Aptera (today Aptara) in Crete:

> Here I lie, Sympherousa, aged thirty,
> a foreigner of Libyan origin.
> Through prudence and affection in all my affairs

[32] Some scholars remain sceptical, Bing 2002; Day 2007, 29. See, however, Herrmann 1995, 190; Gutzwiller 1998, 1–14; Rife 1999, 120–121.

[33] Kazazis 1989, 32; for the social considerations dictating the choice of the poetical repertoire in verse inscriptions, Lougovaya 2004, 211; for sarcophagi reliefs, Whitehead 1984.

[34] E.g. *Peek GV*, no. 920; *Peek GV*, no. 1156 and *SGO*(4), no. 18/18/01.

[35] Gutzwiller 1998, 10, n. 33; Bing, Bruss 2007, 4; Tsagalis 2008, 54–58. For the literary testimonies, Rife 1999, 121; Spina 2000, 4, n. 10; Chamoux 2000.

[36] For the significance of emotions for the classification of funerary epigrams, Tybout 2003b. See also Fumarola 1952; Lindner 1972.

I joined the dwelling of the gods[37]
and greatly for [my] attitude valued,
in this valued city, among the people of Aptera,
who too rewarded me with their grief at my sudden death,
simply sending me off to Hades, [having laid me] in a grave.
Farewell to all, frankly,
you, passers-by, and you, people of Aptera,
who with no hesitation laid me to rest
in this great urn, with passion and honour.

—"I, Nikon, wrote this. Her onetime husband.
Now no more: a victim of the evil eye,
I gave the beauty to someone else,[38]
[the woman] that I desire so much,
for her prudence, as I wrote above, and I am helpless.
I shout, but she does not hear.
I hold on to [this] love, I will continue to be,
who I was, but I can do nothing;
she flew straight away like the wind."
(translation with the revisions by A. Chaniotis, per. litt.)[39]

τριάκοντα ετῆς Συμφέρουσ' ἐνθάδε
κ[εῖ]μαι, ξένη, γένει δὲ Λίβυσσα,
θε[οῖς] σύνναιος σωφροσύνῃ καὶ
στοργῇ κατὰ πάντα ἐμοὶ γεγο-
νοῦσα, τοῖς δὲ τρόποισι λείαν ἀρέ-
σασα σεμνῇ πόλει, Ἀπτεραίων δήμ⟨ῳ⟩,
οἵτινες καὶ αὐτοὶ λύπην κατέθεντο
αἰφνιδίῳ θανάτῳ, ἀπέπεμπαν ἁ-
πλῶς εἰς Ἅϊδα τύμβῳ. χαίρετ' ἁπλῶς
πάντες παροδεῖται καὶ Ἀπτεραίων
δῆμε, οἵτινες σπουδῇ καὶ δόξῃ τα-
χέως κατέθεσθ' ἐμὲ εἰς μέγα τεῦχος.

εἰμὶ δ' ἐγὼ γράψας Νείκων ὁ ἀνὴρ
αὐτῆς γεγονώς γε, νῦν δ' οὐκέτι·
βασκανθεὶς γὰρ ἐγὼ ἄλλῳ τὸ καλὸν
παρέδωκα, ἥντιν' ἐγὼ ποθῶ λείαν
διὰ σωφροσύνην καθὼς προγέ⟨γ⟩ραφα,
κοὐδὲν ὅλως ἀνύω. vac. κραυγάζω

[37] Σύνναιος = σύνναος, literally 'living in a temple together with [the gods],' that is venerated by their side.

[38] That is Hades, death, who envied the man who had this beauty.

[39] The lines of the Greek text as they appear on stone, Guarducci 1929; Galdi 1930; Guarducci 1935–1950(2.3), no. 44; Lattimore 1942, 276; Alexiou 2002, 173–174; Martínez Fernández 2007.

κοὐκ ἐπακούει· τῇ στοργῇ μὲν ἐγὼ
κατέχω· ὡς εἶχον ἔσωμε τῷ αὐτῷ·
vacat
κοὐδὲν ὅλως ἀνύω· ὡς ἄνεμος γὰρ ἁπλῶς ἐπετάσθη.

This is one of the most open and spontaneous expressions of marital love to be found among extant epitaphs. It is almost as if we hear the voice of the distraught Nikon on the day of his wife's unexpected death.

The testimony of a mother's distress veiled behind a restrained text is presented by an epigram on a tomb from Rome (3rd–4th century AD):

I am Markella's grave. Who she was, this inscription shall say:
a recently married girl, twenty years of age.
Wrote [this] I, who bore and buried her
—carrying in my heart no small burden of grief.[40]

Μαρκέλλης τάφος εἰμί· τίς αὕτη, γράμματα λέξει·
ἀρτίγαμος κούρη, εἴκοσιν οὖσα ἐτέων.
αὐτὴ ἡ γεννήσασα καὶ κηδεύσασα ἐπέγραψα,
ἄχθος ἔχουσα κραδίης πένθεος οὐκ ὀλίγου.

In an epigram in Phrygia (Kotiaion) from the 2nd–3rd century AD, the mother, Gorgas, turns to her deceased son, Papirios, and simply states that no-one is there, all that remains are tears.[41] A funerary epigram in Adada in Pisidia from the 2nd century AD expresses a father's wish to die after the loss of his son.[42] Another epigram records the case of a man committing suicide or dying of grief following the death of his namesake son.[43]

Individualism and Polemic

Apart from the individual experience, other factors could also contribute to the process of individualisation of funerary poetry. The epigrams are the best evidence of the diversity of eschatological opinions. Indeed, one gets the

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[40] *Kaibel EG*, no. 679; *Peek GV*, no. 120; *IGUR*(3), no. 1267.

[41] *Peek GV*, no. 1437; *SGO*(3), 16/32 / 09. In an epigram from Alexandria a mother complains that from now on she cannot thrust her arms around her son's neck, *Peek GV*, no. 1827; Bernand 1969, no. 62.

[42] *Peek GV*, no. 1397; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 174a; *SGO*(4), no. 18/09/04. For the death from despair over the death of adopted son, *Peek GV*, no. 1265; *CIRB*, no. 129; *SEG*(52), no. 745, Tischow 2002. For the sons' suicide following his father's death, Touchais 1984, 789, and *BE* 1988, no. 44.

[43] *Peek GV*, no. 654; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 175; *IK*(16.6), no. 2103; *SGO*(1), no. 03/02/65; *IK*(59), no. 75.

impression that standard phrases are far more common in the epigrams that do not refer to afterlife and immortality than in the epigrams that do.[44] They show a wide range of stances, from the totally nihilistic, occasionally falling into desperate hedonism via vague premonitions/theories/hopes of survival or meeting kinfolk after death to clearly defined concepts of immortality and the hereafter.[45] Pagan ideas of the afterlife were unclear, vague, hypothetical, lacking logical order and dogmatic rigour; though, this does not mean that they were never discussed. Conventionalism and internal contradictions with regard to views on life after death should not be confused with indifference. Although funeral rites and the ways the dead were mourned did not undergo any fundamental changes in antiquity, there were never any firmly established views on the afterlife or the attitude to death, which were therefore frequently questioned and treated as a subject of free discussion.[46] One ancient tombstone inscription refers directly to these doubts, seeing in them an inalienable aspect of humanity:

> I myself, being a stout-hearted man, have thought over every possible
> ending of easy life, and wondered if, where the road of life breaks
> off, after the soul's breath has fled from the body,
> there can be anything left. (transl. R. Lattimore)[47]

> ἄνθρωπος κἀγώ τις ἐὼν ταλα⟨ς⟩ίφρονι {ι} θυμῷ
> ῥηιδίου βιότου πᾶν τέλος ἐφρασάμην,
> ἴχνος ὅπου λήγει βιοτήσιον ἤ τι περισσὸν
> σώματος ἐσσεῖται πνεύματος ἐκπταμένου.

An anonymous epigram on a herm adorning a tomb (Rome, 2nd–3rd century AD) took a more trite approach:

> I did not exist, I was born; I existed, I do not exist; so much (for that). If anyone says anything different he will be lying: I shall not exist.
> (transl. G.H.R. Horsley)[48]

> οὐκ ἤμην, γενόμην· ἤμην, οὐκ εἰμί· τοσαῦτα·
> εἰ δέ τις ἄλλο ἐρέει, ψεύσεται· οὐκ ἔσομαι.

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44 A. Chaniotis, per. litt.

45 Similar diversity in the Jewish epigrams Bernand 1969, 94 ad no. 15 and 199 ad no. 42; Park 2000.

46 Marrou 1944; Richardson 1985. For the funerary traditions, Nijf 1997, 31–32 and, generally, Samellas 2002.

47 *Peek GV*, no. 261; *SGO*(4), no. 17/08/04; cor. *SGO*(5), 12.

48 *Kaibel EG*, no. 1117; *Peek GV*, no. 1959; *IGUR*(3), no. 1398; Pfohl 1980, 34–35, no. 31; Horsley, Llewellyn 1981–2002(4), no. 13; Bremer 1994, 114.

Such declarations of doubt in the afterlife are often found in tombstone inscriptions from the later Greco-Roman period.[49] Nevertheless, the author of this particular epigram is more forthright, which implies a polemic with metaphysical optimists, not necessarily Christians. Just like the Platonists believed in the pre-existence of souls and therefore also in their continued existence after death, so too the opponents of faith in immortality reasoned that life did not exist before birth and therefore could not exist after death. At the very least it is a reflection of worldview doubts, disputes and discussions among the people of antiquity.

Romana's epigram (2nd- or 3rd-century BC), inscribed on a sandstone tablet in Side, in Pamphylia, is also telling:

> Some say that after life's numerous toils,
> the souls of the dead fly up together into the vast heavens.
> This is a myth. To no avail all the food that you bring for me.
> If this tomb says anything, it expresses it in silence,
> who was I, how long my ephemeral life ran,
> in fear of my husband and in love with him.
> I, Romana, loved Zosimion,
> when he deserved it with his noble manner.
> For he took me, [his] children's mother, not only in the bedchamber,
> but he also took me, the highest priestess, to the most celebrated theatre stages,
> I dressed in purple; gold on my temples he placed,
> a gift worthy of my marital virtues.
> Me, whom in this way, as fate would have,
> in grind for thirty-four years did live,
> against his will in Pluto's house he laid.[50]

> φασί τινες νεκύων μετὰ πουλὺν ὄχλον βιότοιο
> πωτᾶσθαι ψυχὰς πλατὺν ἠέρα· τοῦτο δὲ μῦθος·
> πάντα γάρ, ὅσσα φέρεις βρώμης χάριν, ἐστὶ κενὴ φλόξ·
> στήλη δ' εἴ τι λαλεῖ, σειγῶσα φέρει, τίς ὑπῆρχον,
> ᾗ βίοτον πτηνὸν δολίχευσα φόβοισι φιλάνδροις·
> Ῥωμάνα φιλέουσα τρόποις ἴσα Ζωσιμίωνα·
> οὔτ[ι] γὰρ εἰς εὐνὴν μόνον ἤγαγε μητέρα παίδων,
> ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰν θυμέλαισι κλυταῖς φέρεν ἀρχιέρειαν

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[49] The Latin counterpart, *non fui non sum non curo*, was so popular that it was abbreviated as *nfnsnc* (e.g. *CIL* 5.1813). See Cumont 1928; Nock 1946, 158, n. 76; Vérilhac 1978(2), 289 (with references) and *IGUR*(3), ad no. 1397; Betz 1998, 404, n. 22; Peres 2003, 27 and 164–165 (Epicurean). For some Hermetic interpretations, Simon 1936, 197, n. 1.

[50] Nollé 1985, 117–121; *SEG*(35), no. 1427; *SEG*(38), no. 1438; *BE* 1989, no. 773; van Bremen 1996, 117–118; Hayward 1998; *EBGR* 2001, no. 132 (slightly different interpretation); *IK*(44.2), no. 226; Samellas 2002, 26; *SGO*(4), no. 18/15/13; Hotz 2005, 183–185.

φάρεσι π[ο]ρφυρεοῖς, ἐπὶ κρατὶ δὲ θήκατο χρυσόν,
δῶρο[ν] σωφροσύνης ἀντάξιον· ἣν μετὰ μοῖραν
τέσσερα καὶ τριάκοντα πόνοισιν ἔτη διαβᾶσαν
θήκατο Πλουτῆος οὐκ ἐθέλων με δόμοις.

Bogus tales (μῦθος) of souls rising up together and of the deceased's hunger and thirst evoked in the first verses are sharply contrasted by what the silent but closer-to-the-truth epitaph communicates. Romana (or rather her husband, who puts words in her mouth) emphatically states that all myths, tales of the afterlife are no more than stories.

Some epigrams even had a quite iconoclastic tone, as for example one inscribed on a marble slab in Rome (3rd or 4th century AD) for Cerellia Fortunata:

Traveller, do not pass by my epitaph,
but stop, listen and, when you have learned, carry on.
There is no boat in Hades, no ferryman Charon,
no Aeacus, holder of the keys, or any dog called Cerberus.
All of us [who] have died down here into nothing
but bones and ashes have turned.
I have told you as it is. Now go forth, traveller,
so that after death you might not think me to be to over talkative.

On this tomb no ointments or garlands
as offerings lay, for this just a stone.
Light no fire;[51] it too is a wasted investment.
If you want to give me something, give it in [my] lifetime.
Wine poured on ash won't quench the departed's thirst,
all you'll make is mud, and that'll be me.
Instead, having thrown a handful of soil on [the graves], say:
"what I was,[52] when I did not exist,
I have again become."[53]

μή μου παρέλθῃς τὸ ἐπίγραμμα, ὁδοιπόρε,
ἀλλὰ σταθεὶς ἄκουε καὶ μαθὼν ἄπι.
οὐκ ἔστι ἐν Ἅδου πλοῖον, οὐ πορθμεὺς Χάρων,
οὐκ Αἰακὸς κλειδοῦχος, οὐχὶ Κέρβελος κύων·
ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες οἱ κάτω τεθνηκότες
ὀστέα τέφρα ⟨γ⟩εγόναμεν, ἄλλο δὲ οὐδὲ ἕν.
εἴρηκά σοι ὀρθῶς· ὕπαγε, ὁδοιπόρε,
μὴ καὶ τεθνακὼς ἀδέλεσχός σοι φανῶ·

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[51] That is the funeral pyre or the cremation of the deceased's body.
[52] That is earth, dust.
[53] *Kaibel EG*, no. 646; *Peek GV*, no. 1906; *IGUR*(3), no. 1245.

μὴ μύρα, μὴ στεφάνους στήλλῃ χαρίσῃ· λίθος ἐστίν·
μηδὲ τὸ πῦρ φλέξεις· ἰς κενὸν ἡ δαπάνη.
ζῶντί μοι, εἴ τι ἔχεις, μετάδος· τέφραν δὲ μεθύσκων
πηλὸν ποιήσεις καὶ οὐκ ὁ θανὼν πίεται·
τοῦτο ἔσομαι γὰρ ἐγώ, σὺ δὲ τούτοις γῆν ἐπιχώσας·
εἰπέ· ὅτ⟨ι⟩ οὐκ ⟨ὢν⟩ ἦν· τοῦτο πάλιν γέγονα·

An epigram inscribed sometime between the 1st century BC and 2nd century AD on a marble slab on the island of Astypalaea (in the Sporades) expresses similar thoughts:

Do not bring anything for me to drink, for I drank when I was alive,
and it does no good: nor anything to eat, I need nothing. All that is
nonsense. But if for the sake of remembrance and the life we had together,
you bring saffron or frankincense, then, friends, you are giving
appropriate gifts to those who have taken me into their keeping.
These things belong to the gods below; dead men have nothing to do
with the living.

Cleumatra's [tomb]. (transl. R. Lattimore, supplemented)[54]

μή μοι πεῖν φέρεθ' ὧδε, μάτην πέποται γ⟨ά⟩ρ, ὅτ' ἔζων,
μηδὲ φαγεῖν· ἀρκεῖ· φλήναφός ἐστι τάδε.
εἰ δ' ἕνεκεν μνήμης τε καὶ ὧν ἐβίωσα σὺν ὑμεῖν
ἢ κρόκον ἢ λιβάνους δῶρα φέρεσθε, φίλοι,
τοῖς μ' ὑποδεξαμένοις ἀντάξια ταῦτα διδόντες,
ταῦτ' ἐνέρων· ζώντων δ' οὐδὲν ἔχουσι νεκροί.

Κλευμάτρας

This epitaph contains a deeper worldview manifestation. Cleumatra rejects traditional and popular attitudes to death. She accepts the existence of life after death as well as the existence of gods (and the fact that offerings probably reach them), but she rejects any notion of contact and communication with the dead. This would have added the sense of isolation and emptiness among those touched by Cleumatra's death. The deceased does not wish for offerings to be placed on her tomb; all she wants her friends to do is bring small gifts in remembrance of the time they spent together. However, these gifts would not actually be for her but for the gods, in gratitude for their kind welcome and hospitality. The text repeats virtually word for word an epigram attributed to Nicarchus in the *Palatine Anthology*, with a small but deliberate alteration: receiving the deceased are 'gods of the underworld' instead of the originally mentioned dead:

54 *Peek GV*, no. 1363.

Bestow not scent and crowns on stone columns,
nor set the fire ablaze; the outlay is in vain. Give
me gifts, if thou wilt, when I am alive, but by
steeping ashes in wine thou wilt make mud, and the
dead shall not drink thereof. (transl. W.R. Paton)[55]

Μὴ μύρα, μὴ στεφάνους λιθίναις στήλαισι χαρίζου·
μηδὲ τὸ πῦρ φλέξῃς· ἐς κενὸν ἡ δαπάνη.
ζῶντί μοι, εἴ τι θέλεις, χάρισαι· τέφρην δὲ μεθύσκων
πηλὸν ποιήσεις, κοὐχ ὁ θανὼν πίεται.

The intention was probably to make the tombstone inscription sound less nihilistic. Cleumatra's epigram is about more than just coming to terms with reality by rejecting all delusions and concealed bitterness. Cleumatra speaks out against the traditional funerary cult which was supposed to somehow keep the living and the dead in touch with each other for their mutual benefit.[56] The offerings for the dead were usually food and drink (honey, flour, milk, wine and olive oil), which were not only intended as gift for the dead, but also, to a certain extent, were supposed maintain the feeling that the there was communion between the world of the dead and that of the living. They allowed for a feeling of contact with the dead and in a way 'humanised' them. Some of the epigrams express this view. An undated epigram from Lykandos in Cappadocia mentions an altar that the deceased's wife had raised for him to exist among future people. In this way she expressed the conviction that by practicing a cult for the dead on the altar contact between the dead and the living could be maintained.[57] Such was the basic assumption of many epigrams which outlined the details of the higher, supernatural status of the dead as heroes.

Here there must have been declarations of genuine convictions, for in cemeteries, so it would seem, there was freedom of expression for religious convictions and outlooks on life.[58] One could express whatever view of the hereafter without fear of social condemnation or political repression. One could even question the most respected authorities. There was no binding dogma, no aggressive propaganda. Some inscriptions were openly

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[55] *AP* 11.8. See also the similar statement in *Kaibel EG*, no. 298; *Peek GV*, no. 2006; *SGO*(1), no. 03/06/04.

[56] Compare the 'religious,' cultic, literal interpretation of the heroic status ascribed to some of the dead, Robert 1937, 306–308 and 391; Lattimore 1942, 126–128 (I will come back to this topic in a separate chapter).

[57] Peek 1980, no. 50; *SEG*(30), no. 1565; *SGO*(3), no. 13/11/01.

[58] Farnell 1921, 397; Dover 1974, 261–268; Casey 2004, with the comments in *SEG*(54), no. 1840 and *EBGR* 2005, no. 29.

godless or polemical, expressing world outlook tirades. There was an open and free discussion between the holders of various religious beliefs and views on life[59] which sometimes became quite heated. Therefore the well-known disputes between early Christian Greeks regarding issues such as the meaning of salvation, the Holy Trinity or the humanity of Christ were not a new phenomenon. Intellectual curiosity, so typical of the ancient Greeks, as well as their tendency to formulate arguments, to engage in polemics, all naturally began to include eschatological questions long before the onset of Christianity, as is evidenced in funerary epigrams.[60]

Between Uniformity and Diversity, towards Interpretation

All things considered, a further step may now be taken. Highly individualised expressions of authentic, metaphysical despair are as rare as individualised expressions of metaphysical optimism. The simple question is: do we have reliable, substantial 'optimistic' testimonies outside this narrow idiosyncratic category? Where and how to find them?

It seems that a number of epigrams can be classified as somewhere in between 'conventional' and 'individualistic,' as presented in the preceding chapters. It is certainly true that views of life after death were usually presented using various ideas copied from anthologies, set formulas and themes. That is why the first thing the reader notices is standardization. For this reason in his seminal work W. Peek introduced a detailed classification of epigrams into categories and subcategories according to their themes, wordings, etc. This enhanced the impression that we are dealing with a mass of impersonal, stereotypical texts. Nevertheless, there are actually still many differences between particular epigrams. For it is important to understand that the actual selection of theme or convention was an individual person's decision, more often than not based on personal experiences.[61] Relatives

59 Rohde 1925, 237, 440–441, n. 19; Peek 1942, 31.

60 Especially in the case of philosophical epitaphs, Rohde 1925, 542; Tod 1957; Peek 1960, 41, n. 3; Breuer 1995, 52, n. 165.

61 Chaniotis 2012 draws a distinction between the series of epigrams in which the voice of the dead is manipulated to express ideas of afterlife and epigrams that do not present the voice of the dead. Occasionally the deceased person is presented as speaking, whereas in fact the voice of the dead is manipulated by the living, who present the dead to say what they want to hear. This manipulation of the voice of the dead fulfils an important emotive function: since the dead person asserts the fact that he/she has reached a better world, he/she allows the bereft to reach closure with their grief. Only if presented in the first person (the dead, who knows what death is, speaks) these phrases are effective. These statements become

could also choose from a wide range of *topoi* (e.g. religious, mystery or eschatological presentations) such ones that suited specific circumstances. Thus occasionally people felt they were allowed to express their individual emotions and views, because, after all, personal poetry can also depend on the appropriate use of set phrases.[62] For example, the diverse use of sentences in the *carpe diem* phrase, a very conventional dictum, may have referred to and taken into account very specific situations in life. Thus an epitaph from Larissa in Thessaly for one Leucios reminds youths not to delay for too long in taking the hand of their betrothed, because waiting too long is futile.[63] In his time L. Robert stressed the significance of studying funerary epigrams for the sake of discovering the 'histoire des sentiments,' 'histoire des mentalités'. In his opinion, the most original formulations were the most interesting, in other words, ones that were the least common. Nevertheless, despite their 'originality,' he still always put them into a larger 'groupement'; i.e. they never appeared individually but among a group of analogous, parallel texts or formulations. But even as such they maintain a trace of individual, original thought, as a given 'formulation' chosen because it reflected individual sentiments. True, these were a hackneyed form of poetry ('lieu commun,' 'topos'), the work of hired 'rhymesters' ('des poétastres, des poétereaux, des faiseurs de vers, des poètes à gages, des "Graeculi"'), but at the same time they reflected individual attitudes and were selected for this very reason; one cannot deny their sincerity or their association with a definite reality.[64]

If this is the case, we should ask the question: did a certain number of epigrams, greater than the number fulfilling Chaniotis' criterion, express in

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credible, when they come from a higher authority: the authority of the deceased person, or the authority of myth (see the section 'Isidora, Hylas and the Nymphs' in the chapter 'The deceased as the charges of deities' below).

[62] Tybout 2003a.

[63] *IG* 9.2.652; Peek 1974, no. 12; *BE* 1976, no 333, on p. 480; *SEG*(28), no. 524; Noyet, et al. 2004, 110–113.

[64] Robert 1974a, 240 = *Opera*(5), 327; Robert 1970. One may refer to the analogous case of magic lead tablets, the so-called *defixiones*, with their stereotypically formulated nature, as they were transcribed from papyrus anthologies of magic curses. Professional magicians copied spells onto them, leaving a space for a given name or formula to be included. Even if the subject spoke in the first person, it was usually copied by specially hired professionals from a ready-made curse. The abrupt, highly emotional tone of many curses may in this sense be misleading; they certainly cannot be treated as reliable evidence of the actual feelings of the person issuing the curse. Nor can they be regarded as any sort of spontaneous catharsis. On the other hand there still remains a possibility that standard curses sometimes expressed the genuine thoughts of individuals. Professionals hired to cast curses adapted them to suite specific situations and specific clients, even to their individual clients' requests and needs.

a similar fashion the individual convictions of the deceased or their friends and relatives with regard to the afterlife? Contrary to Chaniotis' suggestion, are there examples of epigrams presenting an optimistic view of life after death which do not take into account the deceased's own views or way of life but are also something more than a poetic figure of speech? The choice of a brief 'programme' of one's outlook on life contained in a funerary epigram depended on many circumstances that usually escape our attention: from the way in which the death occurred, the outward appearance of the deceased in his/her lifetime, their personality, biography, what happened at the funeral, the education and social status of the deceased's family and friends as well as the broader social and cultural context regarding the deceased and their family. Ultimately, the choice of form of expression, the theme, the selection of a particular god, the choice of a particular fate after death rather than another, all depended on decisions made by the purchaser or the author of the actual epigram. And here a broad range of possibilities could be considered. We can find many epigrams that are diametrically opposed in terms of attitudes and ideas concerning gods and the afterlife. For instance, they may state that a human death touched the gods, that they sympathised,[65] whereas others state that the gods were quite indifferent. An inscription on the tomb of a three year old boy, Marcus Audius, in Halicarnassus in Caria, presents Hades as a divine being that is pleased by sacrifices being made of people and children, of death and tears.[66] The Moirai could—and frequently did—appear as the traditional goddesses of unavoidable fate, but they could also be portrayed as leading the dead to the Land of the Pious.[67] Descriptions of gods of the underworld were strikingly inconsistent. Such was most often the case of Persephone[68] or Hades himself, who was sometimes seen as a quasi-saviour, sending the dead to the Blessed Land.[69] And thus there were also diverse opinions of the afterlife. The purchaser of the tombstone could use a myth that was ideally suited to expressing hope in

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65 Some examples in Bernand 1969, 272, n. 6; 314, n. 9. For the new evidence, Büyükkolancı, et. al. 2009.

66 *SGO*(1), no. 01/12/15.

67 E.g. *Kaibel EG*, no. 222; *Peek GV*, no. 48; Sève 1996; *Peek GV*, no. 1949; *Peek GV*, no. 1344; *Kaibel EG*, no. 312; *Peek GV*, no. 1765; *IK*(23.1), no. 539; *SGO*(1), no. 05/01/64; Bernabé 2009, 122–123.

68 E.g. Peek 1971a, 25, n. 9; *Kaibel EG*, no. 189; *Peek GV*, no. 1128; *Peek GV*, no. 1150; Bernand 1969, no. 35; Gounaropoulou, Hatzopoulos 1998, no. 392. Similar oppositions are noticeable with regard to Φερσεφόνης θάλαμος.

69 E.g. *Peek GV*, no. 1148 and *Peek GV*, no. 1264; *SGO*(1), no. 01/19/42. Certainly, the traditional, negative vision of Hades predominated.

the afterlife but did not actually express this hope. For instance a deceased woman could be compared to Alcestis without mentioning her rescue from death by Heracles:

> I am a new Alcestis, and died for my good husband
> Zeno, whom alone I had taken to my bosom. My
> heart preferred him to the light of day and my sweet
> children. My name was Callicratia, and all men
> reverenced me. (transl. W.R. Paton)[70]

> Ἄλκηστις νέη εἰμί· θάνον δ' ὑπὲρ ἀνέρος ἐσθλοῦ
> Ζήνωνος, τὸν μοῦνον ἐνὶ στέρνοισιν ἐδέγμην,
> ὃν φωτὸς γλυκερῶν τε τέκνων προὔκριν' ἐμὸν ἦτορ,
> οὔνομα Καλλικράτεια, βροτοῖς πάντεσσιν ἀγαστή.

An epigram in Egypt compares the deceased's death, taken by the merciless will of the Moirai, with the helpless sense of loss felt by the gods Osiris, Adonis, Endymion and Heracles when their lovers were taken from them; yet the author of this epigram makes no comparison of this death with the ultimately fortunate fates of the chosen ones.[71] The same attitude concerns presentations of the deceased as a Hylas and Ganymede being abducted by the gods. From ancient Rome (Ancium) there is a *loculus* with a relief presenting a skeleton and a scoffer. The Greek inscription asks passers-by whether when the look at the carcass they can see in it a onetime Hylas (the personification of youthful beauty, a boy kidnapped by infatuated Nymphs) or a Thersites (the personification of ugliness in old age):

> Taking a glimpse at a corpse, who can say, passerby,
> whether it was Hylas or Thersites?[72]

> εἰπεῖν τίς δύναται σκῆνος λιπόσαρκον ἀθρήσας,
> εἴπερ Ὕλας ἢ Θερσείτης ἦν, ὦ παροδεῖτα.

The epigram on the sarcophagus of Zenobius in Nea Isaura in Asia Minor (3rd–4th century AD) states that among his contemporaries the deceased had a beauty as divine as that of Hylas among the heroes. Nevertheless, although the epigram compares the deceased youth to Hylas, it also states that Zenobius was abducted by Envy, Φθόνος.[73] So it would seem that the

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70 *AP* 7.691; *Peek GV*, no. 1738.

71 *Peek GV*, no. 2028a; Bernand 1969, no. 76; Dunand, Lichtenberg 1995, 3304.

72 *Kaibel EG*, no. 711; *Peek GV*, no. 1612.

73 *Peek GV*, no. 1732; *SGO*(3), no. 14/13/05. Curiously, from Nea Isaura comes also an epigram with the variant of Menander's sentence that those whom the gods love die young, i.e. they are taken to divine abodes; see Lattimore 1942, 259–260 and *SGO*(3), no. 14/13/08. That confirms the availability of various models for the fate of the dead.

boy's parents had no illusions as to his fate after death, though the myth they referred to speaks of Hylas being saved. They only used the myth to stress the magnitude of their loss. In the region of Nikaia in Asia Minor there is an extant epigram stating the premature death of a young man called Ganymede which does not refer to his mythological namesake or any form of happiness in the afterlife.[74] Considerable differences of opinion concerned not only the existence and nature of life after death, but also funeral ceremonies, the way in which the dead were treated by the living and the funerary cult. On some tombs the deceased 'expressed a wish' that they should be duly mourned by everyone.[75] At the other extreme there were requests on tombstones that the living should show restraint and not succumb to despair and lamentations.[76]

We may therefore assume that to some extent the 'standard' epigrams (similarly to other elements of the tombstones, especially the reliefs) reflected a single individual's attitudes to tradition. In such circumstances individual decisions or very specific factors rather than conventional or universal trends affected what was recorded. One should also take into account that people from more affluent and educated circles could pay for more individualised epigrams, more or less reflecting actual circumstances, including the views of the deceased or their family on eschatological matters. The commemoration of a deceased family member was more often than not predominantly the responsibility of an individual person and only partly resulted from traditional customs and law.[77] The ones who were able to order or produce, put up and appreciate the poetic gravestones were, as such, more than anybody else, qualified to belong to this privileged group.

Parallels may be found in the study of Greco-Roman sarcophagus iconography. Contrary to the opinions of those seeing no deeper symbolic or eschatological meanings, K. Fittschen stresses that in antiquity purchasers often personally selected a specific monument; they selected the subject, the presented themes, but, on the other hand, not necessarily the actual style of presentation. Such special orders concerned above all the most sophisticated sarcophagi, in other word elite burials, because most tombs were simple and unsophisticated. According to Fittschen, the study of epigrams

[74] *SGO*(2), no. 09/05/32; *SEG*(51), no. 1713; Takmer, Tüner 2001, no. 4; *BE* 2003, nos. 33 and 36.

[75] Lloyd-Jones 1990, 184–185; Steiner 1999, 391.

[76] Vérilhac 1978(2), 240–247; Boyaval 2000, 87–89; *SEG*(50), no. 1600. For some other examples, Peek 1979; notably one of them presents the idea that excessive despair is οὐχ ὅσιον.

[77] Rife 1999, 121.

may contribute to a better understanding of what ancient sarcophagi actually present. In his opinion, the diversity of views on death and the fate of humans after death as expressed in epigrams are also reflected in the very diverse repertoire of reliefs ('Motivschatz') on sarcophagi.[78]

My conclusion is twofold. For all the complexity of the processes leading to the crystallisation of different poetic, conventional, funerary *topoi*, one cannot dismiss their value for the study of Greco-Roman eschatology. Of great value is the noteworthy category of the epigrams which may be called 'consciously formulaic,' which go beyond the relatively few extant testimonies of 'individual' epigrams. By 'consciously formulaic' I mean deliberately unoriginal types of epigrams, which make the use of familiar (mostly mythological) motifs and conventions of funerary poetry and/or Classical literature, while, at the same time, allowing for the marked differences in attitudes and opinions or beliefs. The study of this category of sources may provide valuable insight into the shaping of individual motifs in the private context of funerary mythology. By taking into consideration the choices of the persons involved in the shaping of funerary commemoration we may get a better insight into the afterlife imagery presented in verse-inscriptions.

[78] Fittschen 1992. See also Whitehead 1984, 45–48, 228–231, 392–407; Clarke 2003, 215.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DEAD AS GODS

Apotheosis of the Dead in Verse-Inscriptions

In my analysis of the exalted condition of the dead in funerary epigrams I will classify cases according to particular cults. Gods, heroes and the dead formed three distinct, though sometimes overlapping, categories, according to a hierarchy of might and influence.[1] Gods had the greatest and most universal power, heroes less so, whereas the dead were the weakest beings, whose influence was basically limited to where they were buried. Heroes differed from ordinary mortals on account of their extraordinary feats, their cult in a given community, their ability to hinder or help the living and their privileged status in the other world. Epigrams show that this hierarchy was sometimes reflected in the level of deceased's ascension.[2] The highest level was direct apotheosis, when the deceased was recognised as a god, θεός. A separate and more common category was the heroisation of the deceased, i.e. when they were recognised as a hero, ἡμίθεος or ἄναξ.[3]

In the following section of the book, I cover the image of the dead as gods or god-like beings in verse-inscriptions. Starting with a very few direct, daring identifications, my argument will proceed to the tangle of inscriptional evidence regarding other, more common, miscellaneous forms of such enhancement of their status. The emphasis will be put on predominantly poetic and formal features of such 'apotheosis' on tombs. They did not constitute memorial monuments meant for the cult of the deceased maintained by relatives after the death of the tomb owner; their intent was to idealise the dead as eternally young and beautiful. To corroborate this assumption two chapters will shortly discuss lessons drawn from the rulers' cult terminology and scholarly debate on the problem of Hellenistic and Greco-Roman 'private deification.' The second part of the section gives an overview of a much more complex, in my view, phenomenon, that

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[1] Ekroth 2002, 330–334; see also recently Bremmer 2006.

[2] Le Bris 2001, 97–112; Peres 2003, 213–214.

[3] Regarding ἄναξ, see Peres 2003, 93. For ἡμίθεος, Rohde 1925, 141, n. 23; in funerary epigrams Peres 2003, 89–90, especially n. 413; Delattre 2007.

of ethereal/astral apotheosis. In the two closing chapters the factors determining the development of this category of epigrams will be discussed. I will emphasise the close links between apotheosis in the Ether and astral apotheosis; these, together with the implications of Roman, imperial worship, explain their relative popularity, in contrast to the rare occurrences of direct apotheosis in the epigrams.

Various forms of the apotheosis of the deceased are found in only a small group of epigrams, of which most originate from the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. The most famous is the epigram from Hermoupolis Magna (1st century AD), in which the father refers to his daughter, Isadora, as follows:

> No more shall I sacrifice to you, my daughter, with lamentation.
> Now I know that you have become a goddess.
> With libations and prayers celebrate Isidora,
> The maiden who has been snatched away by the Nymphs.
> (transl. J. Rowlandson, et al.)[4]

> οὐκέτι σοι μέλλω θύειν, θύγα[τερ μετ]ὰ κλ̣[α]υ̣θμοῦ,
> ἐξ οὗ δὴ ἔγνων, ὡς θεὸς ἐξεγένου.
> λοιβαῖς εὐφημεῖτε καὶ εὐχωλαῖς Ἰσιδώραν,
> ἣ νύμφη Νυμφῶν ἁρπαγίμη γέγονεν.

A somewhat less well-known inscription was found on a tomb in Mesembria in Thrace (2nd century AD?) with a relief depicting the deceased as Hecate:

> I, the goddess Hecate, lie here, as you see.
> Earlier I was mortal, now, as a goddess, I
> am immortal and young for ever.
> I, Julia, daughter of the generous Nikias.
> My native city was Mesembria—
> the name comes from Melsa and "bria."
> The stone commemorates the years I lived:
> in all, three times five, twice over twenty, and, in
> addition, ten and five. (transl. L. Portefaix)[5]

> ἐνθάδε ἐγὼ κεῖμε Ἑκάτη θεὸς ὡς ἐσορᾷς·
> ἤμην τὸ πάλαι βροτός, νῦν δὲ ἀθάνατος καὶ ἀγήρως·
> Ἰουλία Νεικίου θυγάτηρ μεγαλήτορος ἀνδρός,
> Μεσημβρία δέ μοι πατρὶς ἀπὸ [Μ(?)]έλσα καὶ βρία·
> ζήσασα ἔτη ὅσα μοι στήλη κατέχει· τρὶς πέντε δ̣ὲ̣ [ε]ἴκοσι καὶ δέκα πέντε.

[4] *Peek GV*, no. 1897; Bernand 1999, nos. 77–78. I will discuss this text in the chapter concerning the dead being abducted by Nymphs.

[5] *Peek GV*, no. 438a; Mihailov 1958–1970, 1997(1), no. 345; Pfuhl, Möbius 1977–1979(2), no. 2088, pl. 301; Portefaix 1988, 88–91; Dimitrova 2002, 225–226 (regarding the Thracian background).

But these examples are exceptions, for in most other cases there was no association with specific deities.[6] For example, on a stele (2nd–3rd century AD) near Gordium in Phrygia we see the set phrase ἀθανάτοιςι θεοῖς, to parents worshiped as gods.[7] In Smyrna there is an epigram (2nd–3rd century AD?) presented by parents for their deceased four-year-old child, who has become their guardian deity (θεοῖς ἥρωσιν; probably an equivalent of *di Manes*).[8] A priest from Thasos (during the reign of Augustus) presented his deceased wife simply as θεὰ ἐπιφανής, the incarnation of a deity.[9] There are also a certain number of statements of this sort among epitaphs written in prose, especially in Asia Minor. Nevertheless, generally speaking, references to the apotheosis of the deceased are relatively rare.[10]

More frequently there are examples of what can be termed 'passive,' indirect apotheosis, in the sense of returning to an abstract sort of divinity.[11] Most often the dead were identified as stars and Ether. They were deified by becoming or being associated with the elements, which were considered divine, particularly the mother-earth.[12] Poetry of this sort is expressed in an epigram on a stele from Eretria on the island of Euboea, possibly from the 3rd century BC:

> Farewell, Diogenes, son of Diodorus, righteous by nature and pious.
>
> —If earth is a god, then surely I too am a god;
> from the earth I was born, a lifeless body I have become, and from a body to earth.
> Diogenes.[13]
>
> [χαῖρ]ε Διοδώρου Δι[όγε]νες φὺς δίκαιος καὶ εὐσεβής.
>
> [ε]ἰ θεός ἐσθ' ἡ γῆ, κἀγὼ θεός εἰμι δικαίως·
> ἐκ γῆς γὰρ βλαστὼν γενόμην νεκρός, ἐγ δὲ νεκροῦ γῆ
> [– – – – – – – – – – – –] Διογένης [– – – – – – – – –]

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6 Lattimore 1942, 100–101; Vérilhac 1978(2), 321–323; Wrede 1981, 49–50; Peres 2003, 196–217.

7 *Peek GV*, no. 483; *IK*(10.2), no. 1352; *SGO*(2), no. 09/05/41.

8 *Kaibel EG*, no. 314; *Peek GV*, no. 1166; *IGUR*(4), no. 1702; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 106; some recent references Samama 2003, 579. A parallel imagery is used in *Kaibel EG*, no. 312; *Peek GV*, no. 1765; *IK*(23.1), no. 539; *SGO*(1), no. 05/01/64; Bernabé 2009, 122–123.

9 *IG* 12.3, 'Supplementum' 387; Macridy 1912, 10, no. 6; Farnell 1921, 401 (some other examples). Elsewhere I discuss the epigrams alluding to the Olympian apotheosis of the dead.

10 Robert, *BE* 1964, no. 596, on pp. 250–251; see also Welles 1941, 90–92 and *SEG*(31), no. 1688 ad Wrede 1981; *SEG*(34), no. 1300 ad Waelkens 1983; *SEG*(52), no. 1457 bis.

11 In between gods, *IGUR*(2.2), no. 1136.

12 Dieterich 1913, 68–69.

13 *Peek GV*, no. 1126.

One may get an impression of a semi-mystical identification with the earth and the transformation of nature. Divinity seems to override all time and change, while the individual melts into a boundless, eternally regenerating universe. The epigram is, however, formulated in a series of conditional sentences ('if ..., then'), and, therefore, does not present certainty about afterlife.[14] Similar syllogisms (the dead are the earth, the earth is divine, and therefore the dead are divine) can be found on a large number of Greek and Roman epitaphs. From Thisbe in Boeotia (today Kakosi) comes a stele from the 2nd–3rd century AD:

> For the priestess of Charops.[15]
>
> This tomb, traveller, which many times with tears has been bedewed,
> belongs to a priestess; her place worthy of a temple not of a tomb.
> If indeed issueless[16] she was snatched by jealous Hades,
> it's no great matter; dust also envelops the children of the blessed.[17]
>
> Here I lie, dead, and I am dust; if dust, then the earth.
> If earth is a goddess, I am a goddess, and I am not dead.
> (translation with the revisions suggested by A. Chaniotis, per. litt.)[18]

> ἐπὶ ἱερείᾳ Χάροπος.
>
> τύμβος ὁ μυριόκλαυστος, ὁδοιπόρε, τᾶς ἱερείας
> ἇς ὁ τόπος ναῶν ἄξιος, οὐχὶ τάφων.
> εἰ δ' ἄρα τὰν αἰπαιδα ὁ βάσκανος ἅρπασεν Ἅιδας,
> οὐ μέγα· καὶ μακάρων παῖδας ἔκρυψε κόνις.
>
> ἐνθάδ' ἐγὼ κεῖμαι νεκρὰ κόνις· εἰ δὲ κόνις, γῆ·
> εἰ δ' ἡ γῆ θεός ἐστι, ἐγό θεός, οὐκέτι νεκρά.

Such expressive language, though not devoid of literary value, may be misleading. Unfortunately it is difficult to hazard a guess as to which particular religion (or philosophy, e.g. Stoicism) the epigram might be referring to, or whether there is indeed any clearly defined concept and not just rhetorical ornament, a literary equivalent to the physical adornments on the tomb. After all, one could argue that genuine faith in life after death would not need to be supported by such rationalisations. Either way, these types

[14] A. Chaniotis, per. litt.
[15] The local Boeotian deity, Heracles Charops.
[16] Either she was a sacred virgin or she died before bearing children.
[17] That is heroes, demigods.
[18] *Peek GV*, no. 1941; some parallels Vérilhac 1978(2), 295–296, n. 26; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 203.

of association stem from the fact that the Greek word for earth provided the basis for the name of the earth goddess (γῆ, Γαῖα).[19]

Some epigrams indicated the divine status of the deceased not by stating it directly, but by recognising their immortality, as for example this 2nd-century AD epigram from Roman Attica:

> Divine lady, your glory will never be forgotten on earth. Therefore you live
> forever, and your name will not fade, nor shall time destroy the
> glory of your life.
> (transl. R. Lattimore with the revisions by A. Chaniotis, per. litt.)[20]
>
> θεῖα γύναι, σέο κῦδος ἐπὶ χθονὶ οὔ[ποτε λήσει],
> ἔνθεν ἀεὶ ζώεις καὶ ἀκήρατον οὔνομα σεῖο,
> οὔποτε γὰρ βιότοιο τεοῦ χρόνος εὖχος ὀλέσσῃ.

It is characteristic of such epitaphs that together with stressing the immortality of the deceased they also stress their indestructibility. It is enough to give just one example from Rome (2nd–3rd century AD):

> Parthenis rests here, eternally young and immortal.[21]
>
> Παρθενὶς ἐνθάδε κεῖται ἀγήρατος ἀθανάτη τε.

Nevertheless, immortality and 'divinity' did not boil down to the same thing.[22] Such epithets probably did not go beyond the sphere of poetic convention in idealising the dead. After all, it could seem that through death people in a way reached eternity; the timelessness, the inertness, silence and lifelessness of the home of Hades/Pluto (the equivalent of the place where

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19 See the variation on the theme, lacking any optimistic view of afterlife, *Peek GV*, no. 1661; *SGO*(4), no. 22/42 / 06, and comments by Peres 2003, 164.

20 *Peek GV*, no. 1525. Similar imagery in *Peek GV*, no. 743; *IGUR*(3), no. 1358.

21 *Kaibel EG*, no. 634; *Peek GV*, no. 357; *IGUR*(3), no. 1300.

22 See e.g. Lysias, *Oratio funebris* 79–80: 'So we should regard as the most blessed of men those who died after facing dangers for all that greatest and most glorious. They did not surrender their affairs to chance, or await the whims of death, but chose the best of fates. Their memory will never grow old, and their glory is envied by all men. Those who are mourned as mortal in their bodies are praised as immortals for their bravery. They have a state funeral, and in addition, because those who have died in war deserve to be granted the same honours as the immortals.' transl. S.C. Todd (ὥστε προσήκει τούτους εὐδαιμονεστάτους ἡγεῖσθαι, οἵτινες ὑπὲρ μεγίστων καὶ καλλίστων κινδυνεύσαντες οὕτω τὸν βίον ἐτελεύτησαν, οὐκ ἐπιτρέψαντες περὶ αὑτῶν τῇ τύχῃ οὐδ' ἀναμείναντες τὸν αὐτόματον θάνατον, ἀλλ' ἐκλεξάμενοι τὸν κάλλιστον. καὶ γάρ τοι ἀγήρατοι μὲν αὐτῶν αἱ μνῆμαι, ζηλωταὶ δὲ ὑπὸ πάντων ἀνθρώπων αἱ τιμαί· οἳ πενθοῦνται μὲν διὰ τὴν φύσιν ὡς θνητοί, ὑμνοῦνται δὲ ὡς ἀθάνατοι διὰ τὴν ἀρετήν. καὶ γάρ τοι θάπτονται δημοσίᾳ, καὶ ἀγῶνες τίθενται ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ῥώμης καὶ σοφίας καὶ πλούτου, ὡς ἀξίους ὄντας τοὺς ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ τετελευτηκότας ταῖς αὐταῖς τιμαῖς καὶ τοὺς ἀθανάτους τιμᾶσθαι).

dead bodies retire[23]) appealed to the imagination, because only these things did not seem to be subject to transience.[24]

There were also epigrams which explicitly emphasised the similarity between the cults of gods and cults for the dead. In an epigram from Hadrianea in Mysia (3rd century AD) a family honours a son and a brother as a god (ὡς θεῷ).[25] Written in a similar spirit is a prose epitaph from Apameia in Phrygia (2nd or 3rd century AD):

> I, Philoxenos, have in this grave laid to rest the bodies of my father, Gaius, and mother, Ammia, who are in all respects equal to the gods. Farewell, gods among the gods, and may the earth rest lightly on you.[26]
>
> [τ]ὸ[ν πατέρα Γάϊον] Ἀμμιαν τε μητ[έρα] Φιλόξενος κατὰ πά[ν]τα τοὺς θεοῖσ ἴσους ἐν τῶιδε τύμβω[ι] θῆκε, καὶ χαίροι⟨τ⟩έ μοι κουφὴν ἔχοντες γα[ῖαν] ἐν θεοῖς θεοί.

In some inscriptions the deceased became a friend or companion of the gods (φίλος θεῶν, διίφιλοι); sometimes a given god 'kidnapped' the deceased or treated them with particular fondness.[27] Gods took the deceased, sat them on a throne of gold, invited them to banquets,[28] and hosted them in their homes (ναίω, μένω, οἰκέω).[29] There is also a large group of tomb inscriptions where the status of the deceased is not specified and they are associated with neither gods (nor heroes), but are instead seen as beings somewhere between the world of gods and heroes and the world of the living. An important distinction here was for the deceased to have a special relationship

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23 See e.g. *Kaibel EG*, no. 226; *Peek GV*, no. 967; *SGO*(1), no. 03/06/02.

24 The dead are immortal (ἀθάνατοι), because they do not die anymore. Amphis, the comic poet of 4th century BC, mentioned the immortality of death, fr. 8 Kock 1880–1888 = *PCG* 2.8; see also Artemidorus, *Onirocritica* 3.13: 'For [the gods and] the dead are immortal, since they are no longer able to die.' transl. R.J. White (ἀθάνατοι γὰρ οἱ [θεοὶ καὶ] ἀποθανόντες, ἐπεὶ μηκέτι τεθνήξονται). For parallel ideas in funerary epigrams, Le Bris 2001, 168–171. An epitaph from Rome declares: 'and I live and have not died, since I have such a tomb.' transl. A.L. Connnolly (καὶ ζῶ κοὐκ ἔθανον, τοῖον [ἔχουσα] τάφον), *Kaibel EG*, no. 610; *Peek GV*, no. 1112 a; *IGUR*(3), no. 1412.

25 *IK*(33), no. 179; *SGO*(2), no. 08/07/12. For ὡς θεῷ formula, *BE* 1964, no. 596; Herrmann 1992, 72–73; *SEG*(42), no. 1099.

26 *MAMA* 4.362. For the co-existence of incongruous ideas of afterlife that are found in one and the same text, see below, section 'Eschatology and Mythopoeia' in the last chapter.

27 A deceased child as θεῷ μεμελημένον, Rebenich 2000; *SEG*(50), no. 1062; *BE* 2003, no. 62; φιλένθεον, *Peek GV*, no. 581; Sironen 1997, no. 195.

28 The dead Hekatodoros as ὁμέστιος of the gods on Olympus, Herrmann 1998, no. 754; *SGO*(1), no. 01/20/27; see also *Kaibel EG*, no. 312; *Peek GV*, no. 1765; *IK*(23.1), no. 539; *SGO*(1), no. 05/01/64; Bernabé 2009, 122–123.

29 E.g. Wessel 1989, no. 8630; *IGUR*(3), no. 1252.

with the gods and heroes. Such deceased people found themselves among heroes and gods in the other world,[30] they went to the 'Land of the Blessed,' 'Land of Heroes,'[31] 'Sacred House of Heroes,'[32] they sat on the hero's throne or among the heroes (σύνθρονος).[33] There were various forms of κοινωνία with the gods and heroes. Some epigrams, instead of stressing a quasi-divine or heroic status, state that the deceased had acquired various qualities of a divine or heroic life, e.g. by looking at the life of the gods or inhabiting their homes.[34] To this were added assorted privileges: ascending to a heavenly and divine light, as well as acquiring divine honour, heavenly fame, recognition and glory. The theme of the deceased coexisting with the gods after death usually suggested apotheosis of the sort that happened to Heracles and the Dioscuri, that is, heroes who in immemorial times ascended to the honour of being among gods. On the other hand, there is no shortage of epigrams stating that the deceased was a hero among the gods. Sometimes the deceased appears among the gods as their μέτοχος or σύνθρονος, σύνεδρος,[35] exchanging with them pleasantries, e.g. smiles (μειδάω),[36] or simply living a life similar to that of the gods (θειότερος). Divine status is also stated (though rarely) in the sense that the deceased becomes a child of the gods, or attains some other form of affinity with them.[37] In an epigram on a marble slab in Cyzicus (1st–2nd century AD) the deceased states that his family descends from the blood of heavenly beings.[38]

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30 E.g. *SGO*(1), no. 04/12/09.

31 *Kaibel EG*, no. 539; *Peek GV*, no. 1477. Cairon (2006, 778) emphasises that the dead presented in funerary epigrams did not enter the Islands of the Blessed nor Elysium; *Peek GV*, no. 2061; *IGUR*(3), no. 1226 is cited as an exceptional case. See, however, *Peek GV*, no. 1911 and *Kaibel EG*, no. 228b; *Peek GV*, no. 677; *IK*(15), no. 1625; *SGO*(1), no. 03/02/62 and *Peek GV*, no. 810; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 57.

32 *Kaibel EG*, no. 228; *Peek GV*, no. 970; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 73; *IK*(16), no. 2101; *SGO*(1), no. 03/02/72.

33 E.g. *Kaibel EG*, no. 151; *Peek GV*, no. 1162. For the idea of the dead entering the community of heroes, see Betz 1998, 403, n. 21; Graf 1985, 130, n. 75.

34 E.g. *AP* 7.678; *Peek GV*, no. 449.

35 Peres 2003, 206–207, 210, 221–224, 236 and 246.

36 *Kaibel EG*, no. 312; *Peek GV*, no. 1765; *IK*(23.1), no. 539; *SGO*(1), no. 05/01/64; Bernabé 2009, 122–123.

37 Roques 1998 and *BE* 2002, 452.

38 *Peek GV*, no. 1610; *SGO*(2), no. 08/01/34; for further references, Peres 2003, 119.

Gods, Heroes, and Humans

As we have seen, various levels of apotheosis stated in funerary epigrams did not necessarily mean a full, literal 'cult' of the deceased in that particular sense. One should also take into account analogous honours that in Hellenistic times started being bestowed on individuals during their lifetimes or immediately after their death in the πόλεις of Greece. The term used for granting such honours was τῑμή, which meant a cult for gods as well as for heroes.[39] Those who received such ἰσόθεοι τιμαὶ, honours worthy of gods, were rulers or other great benefactors. Here one cannot speak of genuine apotheosis, because such honours were not sufficient for a given individual to be recognised in the collective consciousness as a god.[40] In all probability the term ἰσόθεοι τιμαὶ only meant that a given person received honours equal to those given to gods; it emphasised that the person should be cherished with rituals befitting the cult of a god, but it did not blur the distinction between an eternal deity and a human mortal. It relied on a clear differentiation between people elevated to such a high status and actual gods, particularly the Twelve Olympians. Even the term θεῖος (θεῖος ἀνήρ) indicated rather a person who for some reason was quite outstanding but not divine in the full meaning of that word.[41] It did not have to mean full apotheosis or identification with the Olympian gods, because 'being' a god meant something more than just being called one. The epithet θεός only meant that a given person manifested a potency that was comparable to divine potency and was thus in a certain way superhuman and immortal.[42]

We therefore need to assume that the term apotheosis included various levels, forms and variants. We know cases of the term ἰσοθεόω being used to mean genuine apotheosis. Certainly such was the apotheosis of Heracles, who was called a god, worshiped at altars, for whom temples were built and who was served by specifically dedicated priests. It was a universal belief that this particular hero became a god in the full sense of the word and joined the other gods on Mount Olympus. Lower down this hierarchy was

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[39] Already in Homer, *Odyssea* 11.304.

[40] The Greeks did not even use the term apotheosis for this cult.

[41] Vérilhac 1978(2), 19; Chaniotis 2007.

[42] That's why the terms ἀποθέωσις, ἀποθεόω vel similia could indicate a burial, Waelkens 1983, or simply a death, Nock 1926b, XCIV, n. 222. 'Apotheosis' ἐν τῷ λέβητι (unless ἀποθεωθέντος actually only referred to the funeral ceremony) appears in a tomb inscription from Segeira/ʿAin al-Burj in Syria (1st–2nd century AD), Sartre 1993, no. 5; Bonnet 1997; Muellner 1998; Aliquot 2002; *EBGR* 2008, no. 4.

a category of the living or the dead who were recognised as gods and/or granted a divine status in terms of having their own cult, their own temple or temples, being offered sacrifices or having ἀγών held in their honour. The best known examples of such apotheosis naturally concerned the cult of rulers.

Private Deifications?

So, one should ask—do we find evidence for the existence of deification in private funerary context? There were situations where we can speak of a certain apotheosis, despite the fact that the individual was not called a deity, nor did he/she have a cult in the full sense of the word, as in the case of Heracles or rulers. At most, such people had a simple shrine or their image (e.g. a statue) in a temple beside the traditional gods (θεοὶ σύνναοι). The simplest form of apotheosis was to give the image of the deceased (e.g. a statue on his/her tomb) divine attributes and extol their godly virtues (e.g. in the form of an epigram).[43] Already in the Classical period funerary art started portraying deceased children as Eros (cupids) and women as Artemis, Aphrodite, Hera, Tyche or the Muses. Men were given the attributes of Heracles, Dionysus, Hermes, Chthonios, Apollo or Helios.[44] But such examples of apotheosis in Greek art are rare. They are more common in Roman funerary art, on altars, statuary, urns, funerary temples and sarcophagi. The phenomenon of theomorphism (presenting the dead with divine attributes or actually in the form of deities) became popular in the western provinces of the Roman Empire in the 1st–2nd century AD.[45] Some scholars tend even to believe that ordinary Romans (especially freedmen) practiced private deifications in the funerary realm. How this phenomenon should be interpreted remains, however, an open question. One of the reasons for this is because there

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[43] See e.g. the votive dedications for the gods and doctors; references in *EBGR* 1999, no. 148.

[44] Collignon 1911, 315–328 (the chapter 'Les défunts identifiés avec des divinités'). Interestingly, the identifications with the 'traditional,' acknowledged heroes are virtually lacking.

[45] Most of the statues, reliefs and sarcophagi date to 2nd century AD; among the deities Ceres, Venus, Diana, Mercury and Hercules prevail; on the later sarcophagi, mythological imagery varied considerably (Adonis, Endymion, Ariadne, etc.). Usually the deceased women, children and youths were presented in this way; the adults and the elderly appeared only rarely. The most probable explanation is that when it came to funerary commemoration, the merits and advances were valued more than any mythological identifications. See the two most important studies, Leclercq 1907 and Wrede 1981 passim; some important points were also made by Turcan 1982. For the terminological problems, Wrede 1981, 1–5; contra Engemann 1982, 172, n. 1.

are virtually no extant Greek equivalents of such theomorphism, no precedents for private deifications of this kind in the Hellenistic period. Moreover, while there are many Roman examples, Latin literature mentions them only sporadically and generally without any illuminating interpretation.[46] The widely influential theory on the private deification of the deceased in Greco-Roman culture remains unconfirmed. It is misleading in this case to interpret such examples as evidence of apotheosis or deification. Presentation of the deceased as heroes or gods in literature and art is not a reference to the cult of their divinity, but to the divine virtues they possessed during their lifetime and perhaps their happy existence after death. In no way can this be interpreted as a statement of the deceased becoming a god, yet, unfortunately, this is suggested by the term deification.[47]

Presumably the scarcity of evidence of the dead being recognised as gods results from the fact that it was an alien concept to Greek religiosity; unlike heroisation, which was far more common. The various examples of apotheosis and heroisation that started spreading in the Hellenistic period were therefore not a departure from traditional Greek religiosity, where there was a very clear distinction between gods and humans in that the former were immortal and the latter mortal.[48] We do not have the grounds to interpret them as the start of a new epoch where selected individuals acquired the attribute of immortality, which up until then had been exclusive to the gods. The few examples where we might consider the possibility of a deceased person being regarded as having the divine attribute of immortality are those where we can confirm the influence of mystery cults. But more often than not it was nothing more than comparing the departed to a deity, e.g. that a woman was as beautiful as Venus. Similarly funerary epigrams idealised other deceased as gods.[49] Accordingly, most scholars therefore minimise the significance of apotheosis of the deceased in Greek culture, relegating it to the fringes of the Greco-Roman world where Greeks and Romans came into contact with foreign cultures. Such 'private apotheosis' would constitute a predominantly Roman phenomenon; in the East, the most notable testimonies come from Macedonia and—to a lesser degree—Egypt.[50] It was only there that such cults of the dead existed, for instance

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[46] E.g. Statius, *Silvae* 2.7.124; Apuleius, *Metamorphosae* 8.6–7, and ad loc. Hijmans 1986.

[47] Hallett 2005, 263; contra Wrede 1981.

[48] Rohde 1925, 253–254; Pfister 1909–1912(2), 581–589; Waelkens 1983.

[49] Brandenburg 1967, 219–220 and n. 79; Wrede 1981, 52–53 (Leda as the symbol of female beauty, Alcestis of marital love, Achilles of male ἀρετή etc.).

[50] All important references in Price 1979.

as is apparent in the epigram from Hermoupolis in Egypt for Isidora or the epigram from Thrace that identified Julia as the goddess Hecate.[51] In this sense the study of verse-inscriptions presenting the dead as gods or god-like beings confirms the results obtained through the study of Hellenistic and Greco-Roman funerary art and literature.

Apotheosis in the Ether

All this seems to suggest that apotheosis in epigrams had a conventional, poetic character and appeared sporadically, rather as an elegant metaphor without any mention of a cult for the deceased as a deity. Nevertheless, a large number of funerary epigrams from the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman period do refer to a specific type of apotheosis, namely the return of the ψυχαί of the dead to the divine Ether, i.e. the substance filling the starry heavens.[52] They appear so frequently in epigrams that one may assume them to represent the most widely used eschatological form on tombstones expressing any specific views of the afterlife.[53] It was a manifestation of the idea of 'ethereal immortality,' according to which every human being was made up of a transient body and an immortal substance that came from the heavens. Most scholars date the emergence of this belief to the Archaic Period;[54] though some argue that it did not appear before the first half of the 5th century BC. The notion of Ether, which was fundamental to this belief, probably resulted from the cosmological speculations of pre-Socratic philosophers, according to whom, after death, the πνεύματα of the deceased rose to their maternal element, αἰθήρ. The theoretical foundations were laid by Anaximenes, who asserted that the foundation of existence, both human and that concerning the universe, was breath, i.e. air. The assumption that the human soul, the heavens and the stars were all closely connected, as well as the derivative notion that the soul came from the heavens and would return there, since at least the times of Heraclitus and Anaxagoras was considered an important field of Ionian physiology, i.e. the science of nature and the cosmos.[55] According to Heraclitus, the human soul

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51 See the sceptical comments by Forbes 1956; regarding this important article see also *BE* 1958, no. 111; *SEG*(16), no. 872; *SEG*(19), no. 323. For the apotheosis as a form of heroisation, Jones 2008. Some scholars remain unconvinced, see e.g. the somewhat uncritical approach by Ensoli 2004, especially 214–215.

52 Cumont 1922, 91–109; Lattimore 1942, 31–36; Garland 1985, 75; Bremmer 2002, 7.

53 Rohde 1925, 541–542 (and numerous testimonies presented on p. 572, n. 135).

54 See Pindar, *Nemea* 8.40–44 and ad loc. Meyer 2005, 92; see also Nock 1926b, LX, n. 99.

55 Pfeiffer 1916, 114.

comprised fire; death did not signify its demise, as it was related to the primary substance of ever-living Fire.'[56] Similarly Hippocrates (or rather *Corpus Hippocraticum*) praised the eternal element, the omniscient, fiery, primordial cosmos. For him it was the equivalent of what his predecessors called the Ether.[57] This notion was also present in the works of Euripides, who extols eternal, divine Ether.[58] After death, souls leave the human body and become one with the divine, primordial element.[59] By diffusing into this matter, souls probably retained their individual consciousnesses, but the new 'life' would be quite unlike the life they had experienced so far. But while Euripides assumed the immortality of what was immortal in man, he did not accept that the individual as such was immortal.[60] One may suspect that ideas of this sort became more popular in the 5th century BC. Epicharmus alludes to them (at the turn of the 5th century BC),[61] and in 5th-century Athens the notion was further developed by Diogenes of Apollonia, who taught that the soul or the mind (νοῦς) was hot, fiery air (ἀήρ), a particle of divinity, the primordial matter of creation.[62] This was probably a continuation of the idea that the human soul was a particle of fiery Ether. Significant contributions were also made by Orphic and Pythagorean theosophy, according to which, once freed from earthly influences, the souls of followers initiated in the mysteries experienced apotheosis. These followers assumed the idea of Ether to be their own. According to Pherecydes of Syros (in the mid 6th century), Zas (i.e. Zeus) was in reality ethereal heat, the first governing principle of cosmos.[63] According to Alexander Polyhistor (1st century BC, drawing on Pythagorean *Notes*, *Hypomneumata*), everything that made up Ether should be defined as divine and eternal; the human soul was a part of Ether, and so it too was eternal.[64] According to at least some Orphics, Ether was associated with an impersonal, cosmic Zeus, as opposed to the Olympian Zeus.[65]

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56 Diels, Kranz 1951–1952, 22 B 30; 22 B 77, 36 = 51 and 66 Marcovich 1967.

57 Hippocrates, *De carnibus* 2 = Diels, Kranz 1951–1952, 64 C 3.

58 Euripides, fr. 487 *TGF* = *TrGF*(5.1). For the idea of Ether in Euripides see Egli 2003, 94–120.

59 Euripides, *Supplices* 1140. See Rohde 1925, 435–438, 516–517, n. 53; Pucci (2005).

60 Le Bris 2001, 89–94.

61 Epicharmus, fr. 245 *CGF* = *PCG*(1), no. 213 and pseudo-Epicharmus, fr. 265 *CGF* = *PCG*(1), no. 254.

62 Theophrastus, *De sensu et sensibilibus* 39–40 = Diels, Kranz 1951–1952, 64 A 19.

63 Diels, Kranz 1951–1952, 7 A 8–9 = F 60, 65–67 Schibli 1990, and the remarks by Torjussen 2008, 147–152.

64 Alexander Polyhistor 273, fr. 93, *FGH* 1940 = Diogenes Laertios, *De clarorum philosophorum vitis* 8.24; Diels, Kranz 1951–1952, 58 B 1a.

65 The echoes of the Orphic σῆμα—σῶμα formula in funerary epigrams promoting the

This line of thought continued to develop thanks to the fact that the concept of Ether was also taken up by members of other schools of philosophy that later gained greater importance, above all the Stoics. Stoicism stated that the soul (αἰθέριον σῶμα) returned to fiery Ether (πῦρ νοερόν), from whence it had originally come and whose particle it was. Classical Stoics were not concerned with the fate of souls after death, as they believed souls would anyhow cease to exist, in a 'conflagration' together with the entire universe. However, a rather different view was held by the Eclectic Stoics, primarily Posidonius of Apameia (2nd–1st century BC), who developed a somewhat more optimistic eschatology. According to Posidonius, the ethereal human spirit (πνεῦμα) had the same nature as the deity that was present in the entire world; this was the deity in man (συγγενής δαίμων). After death, eternal happiness awaited the soul in contemplating the cosmos and stars.[66] It is suspected that in the Hellenistic period the idea of returning to the Ether gained credence when it was adopted in various literary, philosophical and religious trends; an important factor was the influence of the popular treaties of Stoic philosophers who propagated the idea of the soul as a fiery breath.

The basic premise was as follows. Humans were beings who after death broke down into separate parts: the body, which was absorbed by the earth; the soul, which rose up to the Ether, and the name, which remained among the living. This simple statement concealed a very specific type of cosmology. The world was made up of four different elements. The heaviest and most dense, earth, congealed in a solid, stationary mass, formed something like a depository of silt, dregs and sediments. It was cold, coarse and impure. The second element, water, lay spread out on its surface. The two remaining elements were lighter and therefore positioned higher up, in the atmosphere. A moist element manifested itself in the form of vapours, mists and clouds in its lower, air-filled reaches. Higher up, enveloping the earthly globe was a restless layer, continually set in motion by winds. Here, wherever starlight failed to reach, darkness prevailed. The atmosphere (ἀήρ), polluted and unsettled near the earth, became purer the further away it was, reaching out to the moon. Above the moon was the sphere of the stars, a vast dome that was the outer boundary of the world. Fiery Ether (αἰθήρ), the purest of the elements, formed the clean and clear, bright 'air' which rose above

return of the soul to the Ether: *Peek GV*, no. 1742; Bresson 1991, no. 184; *IK*(38), no. 15; *SGO*(1), no. 01/03/01; see also—perhaps, depending on the reading—Moysey, Dolan 1987, and the correction by Clinton 1988a.

66 This is probably alluded to in Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 1.42–47.

the heavier, thick, murky and misty layer of 'ordinary' air, the atmosphere directly covering the earth. The Ether existed above the world inhabited by us, or, to put it another way, between heaven and earth. It was the highest, purest part of the atmosphere, its celestial, fiery element. Sometimes it appeared as a divine substance. Sometimes it was even defined as Zeus himself; it was out of him that the stars were supposed to be made, he was supposed to be the substance filling the heavens, that is the home of the gods. This element, hot and light, had a tendency to rise, while its subtle, crystal-clear flame at the very top of the cosmos was apparent in the shining stars. These were in constant motion, to the regular rhythm of the cosmic dance. On account of their brightness, perfection of movement and spherical shape, in other words beauty, they were considered divine beings.[67] Thus above us, moving on a set course, were the heavenly bodies, the sun, the moon, the planets and the stars, bathed in subtle and pure matter; a domain of order, mathematical precision, invariability and beauty. But we ourselves were committed to the world beneath the moon, with its heaviness, darkness and struggling elements. A world governed by constant change and destruction.[68]

Epigraphic Testimonies

Since Hellenistic times, throughout the Greco-Roman period, right up to Late Antiquity we find variations on the idea of the human soul returning to divine Ether on numerous funerary inscriptions (including ones on Jewish and Christian tombs). It is mentioned in as many as twenty epigrams in Kaibel's collection.[69] A typical example is a tomb in the form of an altar in Tiberiupolis (?) (today Galar-Yenice) in Phrygia, Asia Minor, from the turn of the 2nd century AD:

> My name is Menelaos. But only my body remains here;
> whereas my soul is in the Ether, immortal.[70]
>
> οὔνομά μοι Μενέλαος, ἀτὰρ δέμας ἐνθάδε κεῖται
> ψυχὴ δ' ἀθανάτων αἴθερα ναιετάει.

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[67] Here opinions differed: they were controlled by a divine spirit, or they were under the care of particular gods, or they were themselves gods.

[68] Cumont 1922, 91–109, 126, 208–218; Rohde 1925, 541–542; Festugière 1932, 146–151; Cumont 1949, 4–9, 142–188; Guthrie 1951, 260–264; Boyancé 1952b, 312–349.

[69] Festugière 1932, 145, n. 3. The list would be much longer now. See Peek 1971b, 220; *EBGR* 1993–1994, no. 46; Chaniotis 2000, 176, n. 16.

[70] *Peek GV*, no. 1031; *SGO*(3), no. 16/22/03.

Much evidence of such beliefs comes from Athens, including the earliest references to life after death in Greek epigrams. The oldest of these is an epigram referring to 150 Athenians who perished in the Battle of Potidaea in 420 BC:

> The ether received the spirits, and the earth the bodies of these [...].[71]
>
> αἰθὲρ μὲμ φσυχὰς ὑπεδέχσατο, σόμ̣[ατα δὲ χθὸν] τōνδε·

This short text has aroused great interest among scholars. An extensive doctoral thesis has even been written about it, for in all probability it had an influence on the evolution of contemporary epigram composition. It was also part of the first epitaph to comprise several different funerary epigrams, thus starting the tradition of so-called parallel epigrams. From the 4th century such a series of epigrams also started appearing on private tombs.[72] What is more, in the earliest example the idea of returning to the Ether refers to soldiers serving the πόλις, which means that it had by then received some sort of official recognition. Therefore it might be significant that from this particular time the theme of the body-soul antithesis and the soul's return to the Ether started appearing on private tombs.[73] In Hellenistic and Greco-Roman times, particularly in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, there was a marked increase in the use of the 'ethereal immortality' theme in tombstone inscriptions in Attica. On a tomb in Athens (?) from the 1st century BC we read the following statement regarding this idea:

> The earth, Sibyrtios, gave you up to light; the earth too
> hides [your] body, while your breath has been taken back
> by the Ether, which had once granted it to you. You have gone,
> leaving your father and mother in distress, aged seven, abducted by Fate.[74]
>
> γαῖα μὲν εἰς φάος ἦ⟨ρ⟩ε, Σιβύρτιε, γαῖα δὲ κεύθει
> σῶμα, πνοὴν δὲ α⟨ἰ⟩θὴρ ἔλαβεν πάλιν, ὅσπερ ἔδωκεν.
> πατρὶ δὲ ς⟨ῶ⟩ι καὶ μητρὶ λιπὼν λύπας ὑπ' ἀνάνκης
> ᾤιχου ⟨ἀν⟩αρπασθεὶς ἑπτὰ ἔτη γεγονώ[ς].

The extant fragments of an epigram for a 19-year-old woman called Phoebe state that she has gone to αἰθήρ (Athens, 2nd–3rd century AD).[75] The soul of

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71 *Kaibel EG*, no. 21; *Peek GV*, no. 20; *CEG*(1), no. 10; Shane Jones 2000.

72 See especially *Kaibel EG*, no. 35; *Peek GV*, no. 1889; Ritti 1973–1974, 649–650 (with references); *CEG*(2), no. 593.

73 Notopoulos 1942; Lausberg 1982, 140, Kritzas 2004, see *BE* 2004, no. 509; *EBGR* 2004, no. 156.

74 *Kaibel EG*, no. 156; *Peek GV*, no. 1759; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 195.

75 *Kaibel EG*, no. 150; *Peek GV*, no. 2055.

another dead Athenian went to divine Ether (3rd century AD).[76] From Attica (2nd–3rd century AD) there is also a fragment of an epigram for a woman called Theodora, whose soul entered the Ether.[77] From this region and epoch (Attica, 3rd century AD?) there is also a Christian tomb with an inscription stating that the soul of the prematurely deceased has gone straight up to the Ether:

> Photius, the child of Photius the [rhetoricia]n was (born)
> of Demostrate, da[ug]hter of Zoilus.
>
> The soil covers the body within, but the soul
> flew away to heaven [Ether] and it lives with the ones it used to live with,
> for it received the gift of honor of the upright way of life.
>
> (transl. E. Sironen)[78]

> ὁ Φωτίου παῖς Φώτιος τοῦ [– – ⏑ –]-ος
> ἐκ Ζωΐλου θ[υγ]ατρὸς ἦν Δημοστράτης·
>
> γῆ σῶμα κρύπτει τῇδέ γ', ἀλλ' εἰς αἰθέρα
> ψυχὴ διέπτη καὶ σύνεστιν οἷς τὸ πρίν·
> τὸ γὰρ γέρας τρόπου γε τοῦ Χρηστοῦ λάχεν.

Understanding the Broad Circulation

Some scholars believe that the original inspiration for such inscriptions may be found in popular philosophy. The idea of the Ether was already widespread in Aristophanes' time and was fashionable in Athens throughout the Classical period.[79] These scholars stress that behind the epigram honouring the fallen at the Battle of Potidaea there is no deeper theology, soteriology or eschatology. This was rather a straightforward interpretation of the basically philosophical concepts of Ionian physics and cosmology.[80] R. Garland compared the epigram for those fallen at Potidaea with a tomb inscription from Piraeus in the 4th-century BC:

> The moist air has the soul and the powerful mind of Eurymachus,
> but this tomb holds his body. (transl. R. Lattimore)[81]

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76 *Kaibel EG*, no. 148.
77 *Kaibel EG*, no. 164.
78 *Kaibel EG*, no. 175; *Peek GV*, no. 881; Sironen 1997, no. 171.
79 Festugière 1932, 150.
80 Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 194, and references in n. 342; Le Bris 2001, 82.
81 *Kaibel EG*, no. 41; *Peek GV*, no. 1755; *CEG*(2), no. 535.

Εὐρυμάχου ψυχὴν καὶ ὑπερφιάλος διανοίας
αἰθὴρ ὑγρὸς ἔχει, σῶμα δὲ τύνβος ὅδε.

Neither epigram states that the ψῦχή of the deceased retained consciousness or any type of identity. In Garland's opinion these were not statements of faith in life after death. On the tomb of the fallen at Potidaea the attribute of immortality served only the funerary monument itself (σῆμα).[82] It only tried to explain the separation of parts that up to death had constituted the human person. After death the deceased's soul returned to its source, in accordance with the widely held conviction among Greeks, that its substance, active like air, breath or the wind, rose upwards to the heavens and stars.

This raises the question of whether it is possible to interpret the majority of the funerary epigrams that speak of the soul returning to the Ether in this way. Was there indeed only conventional, philosophical thought behind such statements?[83] Naturally, there is a lot of evidence to support these assertions. One can even find epigrams referring to Ether in a purely physical sense.[84] Yet to assert that the return to Ether mentioned in epigrams primarily reflected the philosophical thoughts of the elite (even if that was the 'popular,' Stoic reinterpretation of these thoughts), one has to overcome a certain contradiction. If we accept that the idea of Ether was essentially a philosophical doctrine, the product of learned studies of nature and the cosmos, how do we explain its increased presence in funerary epigrams, where philosophical ideas of this sort were rarely expressed? The problem is the same when we assume, as certain scholars do, that some epigrams of this sort reflected Orphic and Pythagorean beliefs. Indeed, we can point to such epigrams where we can trace the influence of religious beliefs, even if they are rare exceptions and very difficult to identify. For example, from Pherae in Thessaly comes an epigram from the early Hellenistic period (3rd century BC?) where the deceased, Lykophron, in the specific context of religious doctrine, is said to have originated from the immortal flame (i.e. Ether):

I, Lykophron, the son of Philiskos, seem sprung from the root of great Zeus,
but in truth am from the immortal fire;

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82 In the first fragmentary lines: ἐμ Π̣οτ̣[ειδαίαι ᾿Αθεναίον hοίδε ἀπέθανον]. ἀθάνατόμ με θα[νο - - - - - - - - - - - - - -] σεμαίνεν ἀρετ[ὲν - - - - - - - - - - - -].

83 Parker 2005, 366.

84 *Kaibel EG*, no. 156; *Peek GV*, no. 1759; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 195. See also ψυχὴ δὲ αἰθέριον κατέχει πόλον in *Kaibel EG*, no. 225; *Peek GV*, no. 1760; *SGO*(1), no. 03/02/71.

and I live among the heavenly stars uplifted by my father;
but the body born of my mother occupies mother-earth.
(transl. A.A. Avagianou)[85]

Ζηνὸς ἀπὸ ῥίζης μεγάλου Λυκόφρων ὁ Φιλίσκου
δόξηι, ἀληθείαι δὲ ἐκ πυρὸς ἀθανάτου·
καὶ ζῶ ἐν οὐρανίοις ἄστροις ὑπὸ πατρὸς ἀερθείς,
σῶμα δὲ μητρὸς ἐμῆς μητέρα γῆν κατέχει.

Let us therefore accept that ideas of this sort went far beyond narrow, esoteric circles of philosophers or members of religious groups. Why?

First of all the issue needs to be more accurately defined. Did ethereal apotheosis really rule out the survival of individual personality? If nothing of the individual remained, no memory, no identity, no individuality, and if everything became part of a deity, where was the attraction in such a view? It is clear that the idea of returning to the Ether went beyond the abstract concepts of pre-Socratic philosophy. It is a concept that had a long and complicated history which has not yet been adequately researched. Ether was not only an element in a philosophical model of the universe right up to Late Antiquity, it was also an important concept in mythological cosmology, the personification of the high heavens, the pure air breathed by gods as opposed to the impure air breathed by humans. In the epic tradition, commencing with Homer, Ether was one and the same as Olympus and the gods:

[...] Olympus, where,
they say, the gods' eternal mansion stands unmoved,
never rocked by gale winds, never drenched by rains,
nor do the drifting snows assail it, no, the clear air
stretches away without a cloud, and a great radiance
plays across that world where the blithe gods
live all their days in bliss. (transl. R. Fagles)[86]

Οὔλυμπόνδ', ὅθι φασὶ θεῶν ἕδος ἀσφαλὲς αἰεὶ
ἔμμεναι· οὔτ' ἀνέμοισι τινάσσεται οὔτε ποτ' ὄμβρῳ
δεύεται οὔτε χιὼν ἐπιπίλναται, ἀλλὰ μάλ' αἴθρη

[85] See Avagianou 2002, underscoring the Dionysiac and Orphic influences on the epigram, but contra Bernabé, Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, 42–43; yet Bernabé included the text in his collection of the Orphic testimonies, Bernabé 2004–2007(1), no. 466. Other interpretations are also possible, see Peek 1974, no. 25, suspecting some Stoic influences, but contra Helly 1978, 130; see also *SEG*(28), no. 528. According to J. and L. Robert, some unspecified theological, philosophical doctrine is presented here, *BE* 1970, no. 337; *BE* 1974, no. 309. For the historical interpretation, Merkelbach 1973a, for whom διογενές Lykophron belonged to the family of the tyrants of Pherai.

[86] Homer, *Odyssea* 6.42–46. See also Hesiod, *Theogonia* ll. 124, 697 and 929.

πέπταται ἀννέφελος, λευκὴ δ' ἐπιδέδρομεν αἴγλη·
τῷ ἔνι τέρπονται μάκαρες θεοὶ ἤματα πάντα.

Ether was also Zeus as a cosmic force. Euripides portrayed Ether as follows:

> Divine Aither, Father of men and gods, and Earth who receivest the moist drops of the showers and bearest mortals, bearest plants and the tribes of beasts; whence rightly art thou called Mother of all.
>
> (transl. W.K.C. Guthrie)[87]

Γαῖα μεγίστη καὶ Διὸς Αἰθήρ,
ὃ μὲν ἀνθρώπων καὶ θεῶν γενέτωρ,
ἡ δ' ὑγροβόλους σταγόνας νοτίας
παραδεξαμένη τίκτει θνητούς,
τίκτει βοτάνην φῦλά τε θηρῶν·
ὅθεν οὐκ ἀδίκως
μήτηρ πάντων νενόμισται.

Ultimately, Ether was where the souls of the dead went; it was associated with the continued existence of the individual after death. In this respect numerous epigrams referred to both the philosophical and the mythological portrayal, which suggests placing the concept of Ether somewhere in the realm of mythopoeia. An inscription from Klaudioupolis in Bithynia (2nd–3rd century AD) lists the divine attributes of deceased Tertulla, emphasising the harmony reigning in her godly soul. The deceased entered the Ether, her eternal home, where she will enjoy a life free of all troubles.[88] In an epigram from Nicaea in Bithynia (3rd century AD) the prematurely deceased Secundus left the light of Helios and went elsewhere, to the Ether, where he is 'doing service' (στρατεύομαι).[89] An inscription on a sarcophagus from Nicosia on Cyprus (2nd–3rd century AD) states that the deceased Eulalios (γαμικὸς—of a marriageable age?) entered the Ether (ψυχὴ [...] εἰς αἰθέρα) and Zeus' court (Διὸς αὐλάς).[90] An epigram from Egypt (3rd–4th century AD) presents the Ether as the home of the gods and declares that those who enter it are like gods.[91]

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87 Euripides, fr. 839; see also fr. 941 *TGF* = *TrGF*(5.2). For Euripides's influence on funerary epigrams, Rougier 1933, 110 and Tsagalis 2007.

88 *IK*(31), no. 71; *SGO*(2), no. 09/09/17.

89 He may have been a soldier, *Peek GV*, no. 1946; *IK*(9), no. 195; *SGO*(2), no. 09/05/14.

90 *Kaibel EG*, no. 288; *Peek GV*, no. 1325.

91 *Peek GV*, no. 1887; Bernand 1969, no. 27.

Astral Immortality

A tomb inscription announcing the return of the soul to the Ether and its happy existence after death does not necessarily signify that the purchaser held a deep belief in life after death or systematised such views into anything like a doctrine. Such inscriptions do not necessarily have to be associated with the development of mystery cults or new eschatological ideas. Nevertheless, by referring to such traditional concepts, the Greeks did express—through poetry and mythology—a sort of metaphysical hope. So why should the notion of divine Ether become a definition of happiness after death circulated throughout the Greco-Roman world? This is not an easy question to answer. Part of the probable answer lies in a combination of several associated factors. The Ether was the home of the stars and therefore there was a close relationship between the notion of returning to the Ether and the notion of 'astral immortality', i.e. the mythological concept of apotheosis in which the deceased became a star. Here we have two different but very closely linked eschatologies.[92] For followers of 'astral immortality', i.e. 'astral mysticism' (as modern scholars have termed it), stars were deities in the heavens, and the deceased became stars. This was an ancient idea that had acquired many colours and hues. Many myths in antiquity reveal a fascination with the stars and celestial bodies, attributing to them a divine character and a specific connection with human fate. Naturally, the most influential area where these ideas were expressed was astrology. But this idea was by no means limited to the philosophical and cosmological speculations of a handful of intellectuals. This was a very widely held view; there was also a deep-rooted belief that stars were simply 'visible gods.'[93] Moreover, select people became stars; such mortals at their life's end were transported to the heavens and underwent apotheosis as gods of a lower order as a result of their καταστερισμός.[94] The best known example of humans being transformed into stars were the Dioscuri twins, Castor and Pollux.[95] According to mythology Heracles, Perseus, Andromeda and many others were also turned into stars. In ancient literature we find numerous references to this form of apotheosis; it was a view held by the Pythagoreans and Stoics. Most scholars assume that it first appeared as a theoretically developed concept in the

[92] Park 2000, 157–164.

[93] Plato, *Epinomis* 984d.

[94] In a narrow sense the catasterisms were learned, etiological stories giving explanation for the existence of individual stars.

[95] Eurypides, *Helena* 138–140.

Pythagorean doctrine of the soul entering heaven through seven spheres. Plato tells us that according to the Pythagoreans every human soul had its own star in the heavens. The soul and its star were united the moment the soul left the temporal world, so close was the bond between the human soul and celestial bodies.[96] Though he did not treat it seriously himself, we know from the writings of Aristophanes that the idea was well known in the 5th century BC: the moment the poet Ion of Chios dies, one of the heroes of Aristophanes' play, Trygaeus (the grape picker) observes a new star shining in the heavens.[97] An inscription on the tomb of Diogenes the Cynic (4th century BC) is said to have declared that his home was the stars.[98] Following in the footsteps of the Pythagoreans, some philosophers, above all the Eclectic Stoics, from Posidonius to Seneca, also believed that souls rose as stars to the sublunary regions of the cosmos. Indeed, they were the ones who popularised the subsequent understanding of the Ether as a psychic element which fed all living organisms.

The fundamental precepts of astral immortality were as follows. When a person dies, something strange happens: he/she ceases to move and undergoes a transformation. Something that a while ago was in the body suddenly leaves it. Searching for the abode of all the countless souls, which with the last breath of the deceased were released into the air, humans looked to the heavens with its myriads of twinkling stars. Those were the souls of the dead. Stars would disappear and then start shining again, depending on whether bodies were entering or leaving them. How so? There was a close relationship between the human soul and stars (συγγένεια). A human was made of a 'sublunary' element, i.e. the body, and an element directly related to the purest element of the cosmos, i.e. the soul. It was the soul that kept our bodies warm and alive, and therefore it had to be of the same fiery nature as the live fires in the sky. The soul was in constant movement. When the human body fell asleep and became motionless, the soul floated away, in our dreams, like the constantly moving planets and stars. They all formed one family, related by light, lightness and purity. Inside humans there was a subtle fire, a divine substance, a part of the Ether, which burned in the form of stars. Thus like fire burning on the ground rises into the air, so too with death the soul was released from the body and rose ever higher, leaving behind the temporal world. The moment of death was not so much a liberation (there is

96 Platon, *Timaeus* 42b.
97 Aristophanes, *Pax* 832–833; see Le Bris 2001, 113–120.
98 *AP* 7.64.

no mention of any dramatic dualism) as a natural and inevitable separation of temporarily mixed elements. The warm, light breath of the human spirit rose in the air, towards the Ether, the heavens, the stars and the sun. From the other side, the light of the upper world attracted its stray particle, that is, the substance of the soul. Within the boundaries of the earth's air souls remained dull and subdued. But when they started their return journey, they once again became iridescent in the Milky Way, on the border between air and the Ether or the light. They became stars and continued their existence in the starry heavens. What had been born on earth returned to the earth; what had been born in the Ether, returned to the heavens.[99]

Apotheosis among the Stars in Verse-Inscriptions

This idea was quite widely reflected in funerary epigrams,[100] even if the notion of the deceased being among the stars (or in the heavens with the gods; the two notions were interchangeable) was rarely specified as catasterism.[101] More often than not it was expressed poetically, the stars being used as a metaphor.[102] Philostorgos, appearing in a relief on a stele from the 1st–2nd century AD (from Arkesine on the island of Amorgos in the Cyclades), portrayed as a youth standing beside a horse and behind a child, speaks to his mother as follows:

> Philostorgos, [son of] Nike, hero.
>
> My name was Philostorgos, raised, as a support[103] for old age, by Nike;
> I lived [barely] twenty years. I saw indescribable sights and was suddenly abducted
> by Moira, [my lifetime, determined] by the goddesses of threads, fulfilled.
> Mother, do not cry over me, what is the use?
> Now that I have become a star in the night sky, among the gods,
> show reverence to me!
>
> (translation with the revisions by A. Chaniotis, per. litt.)[104]

[99] See Cumont 1909, 107–114; Hönn 1910; Pfeiffer 1916; Gressmann 1925; Rougier 1933, Nilsson 1940; Boyancé 1952b.
[100] Strubbe 1998, 50. For the Jewish testimonies, van der Horst 1991, 123–124 and 138–139; for the Christian ones, Lattimore 1942, 312–313 and 318; Selter 2006; Dorfbauer 2009, 154–155.
[101] E.g. *Peek GV*, no. 1264; *SGO*(1), no. 01/19/42; *Peek GV*, no. 1486; *SGO*(2), no. 11/03/02; Samama 2003, no. 324.
[102] Vérilhac 1978(2), 367–369; children as stars ibidem, 325–330.
[103] Literally 'anchor.'
[104] *Peek GV*, no. 1097.

Φιλόστοργος Νείκης, ἥρως.

οὔνομά μοι Φιλόστοργος ἔην· Νείκη ⟨δέ⟩ μ’ ἔθρεψεν
ἄνκυραν γήρως· εἴκοσι δ’ ἔσχον ἔτη.
ἄρρητον δὲ θέαμ’ ἐσιδών, ἅρπασμ’ ἐγενήθην
αἰφνιδίου μοίρης, κλώσματα θεῖα τελῶν.
μήτηρ μή με δάκρυε· τίς ἡ χάρις; ἀλλὰ σεβάζου·
ἀστὴρ γὰρ γενόμην θεῖος ἀκρεσπέριος.

Unfortunately, we do not know what indescribable sights Philostorgos saw. We do not know whether this is a reference to anything mystical, such as being abducted by a deity. And we do not know the extraordinary circumstances of his death. Indeed, it is probable that an extraordinary death inspired the notion that Philostorgius ascended to dwell among the stars.[105]

In an undated inscription from Thyatira in Lydia the soul of Artemon went to the stars and gods.[106] The priestess Isis from Megalopolis in Arcadia (2nd–3rd century AD) went to be among the stars as a ἡμίθεος (demigod), not having experienced any disease.[107] A similar theme is used in an epigram from Aphrodisias (2nd century AD) which states that for services rendered to the city, the hero Eupeithios continues to live among the stars.[108] Another epigram from Aphrodisias states that the pagan Asklepiodotos (c. 480 AD) did not die, did not see the waters of Acheron, but achieved immortality because he had found himself on Olympus and was circling the stars. His tomb comprised a small pyramid mounted on a pediment:

He did not die, nor did he see the stream of Acheron,
but in Olympus Asklepiodotos is among the stars—
he who also built many splendid things for his motherland [...].
(transl. C. Roueché)[109]

[ο]ὐ̣ θάνεν οὐ δ’ ᾿Αχέροντος ἴδεν ῥόον, ἀλλ’ ἐν ᾿Ολύμπωι
᾿Ασκληπιόδο τος τείρεσι συνφέρετε
οὗτος ὅτις δώμησε καὶ ἀγλαὰ πολλὰ τιθήνηι.

In a 2nd/3rd-century AD epigram from Sabini, now Scandriglia, in Lazio in Italy, which was procured for one Aelianus by his father, the son tells his parents that his soul (κέαρ) ascended (ἀνόρο[υσ]ε) to exist among the

105 Graf 1985, 134, n. 95.
106 *Peek GV*, no. 1065; *SGO*(1), no. 04/05/04.
107 *Peek GV*, no. 1163.
108 *SGO*(1), no. 02 / 09/12; Reynolds, et. al. 2007, no. 13.125.
109 *MAMA* VIII 487; *SGO*(1), no. 02 / 09/06; Reynolds, et. al. 2007, no. 11.69. Another example comes from Nikaia in Bithynia, *AP* XV 4; *Peek GV*, no. 1999; *SGO*(2), nos. 09/05/04–09/05/08.

Blessed and is to be worshipped as a god (σέβε μου). Used here is the rare term ἀνορούω, which in epigrams usually means to enter, to fly up into the heavens, the Ether and stars:

> Your father dedicated this tomb to Aelianus, good and prudent
> burying the mortal corpse, but the immortal heart ascended
> to the abode of the blessed, for the soul is eternal,
> gives life and descends from a divine origin.
> Retain, therefore, your tears, father; mother, retain the brothers.
> The body is the tunic of the soul. Honour the god in me.
> (transl. M. Herrero de Jáuregui)[110]

> Α̣ἰλιανῶι τόδε [σῆμα] πατὴρ ἀγαθῶι πι[νυτῶι τε],
> θ̣νητὸν κηδ[εύσα]ς σῶμα· τὸ δ' ἀθάνατ[ον]
> ἐς μ̣ακάρων ἀνόρο[υσ]ε κέαρ· ψυχὴ γὰρ ἀείζ⟨ω⟩[ς],
> ἣ τὸ ζῆν π̣αρέχει καὶ θεόφιν κατέβη.
> ἴσχεό ⟨το⟩ι στοναχῶν πά[τε]ρ, ἴσχε δέ, μῆτερ, ἀδελφούς·
> σῶμ̣α̣ χ⟨ι⟩τὼν ψυχῆς· τ[ὸ]ν δὲ θεὸν σέβε μου.

A similar message is expressed in an epigram preserved on a marble stele with a relief from Albanum in Latium (today Albano Laziale) in Italy from the 3rd century AD:

> Eutychos,[111] son of Eutyches, still as a child went to heaven,
> having touched neither the evil nor the goodness that life brings.
> He lived two years and two months, without five days.
> Look at what the inscription on this stele says:
>
> "Cry no more, beloved father; let not sadness wear you down,
> bearing in your heart this unmitigated pain.
> No, I am not concealed beneath the soil by Hades of the underworld,
> but—when I was joyful [...] and with the light of torches—
> I was abducted by Zeus' companion, the eagle, to raise me up high,
> to stand at the side of the morning star[112] and the beautiful evening star.[113]
> So stop crying father, and lay me an offering,
> for I am a star, as you can see, mounted on a horse."
>
> [This tomb] was raised by a freed imperial slave for his dearest son, Eutyches.[114]

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110 *Kaibel EG*, no. 651 (*Defunctus fortasse Pythagoreus fuit*); *Peek GV*, no. 1763; Bernabé 2004–2007(1), no. 469 (with the wrong *Peek GV*, no. reference number); Herrero de Jáuregui 2010, 69–70 (Orphic).

111 Or Eutyches.

112 Phosphoros, son of Eos, torchbearer.

113 Hesperos, evening star, also carrying torch.

114 *Peek GV*, no. 861; Guarducci 1970, with references.

Εὐτύχης Εὐτύχεους ἔτι νήπιος οὐρανὸν ἦλθεν
οὐ κακὸν οὐδὲ ἀγαθὸν γνούς, βίος ὅττι φέρει·
[ἔ]ζησεν δύ' ἔτη μῆνας δύο ἤμασι πέντε
ἧττον· ἰδοὺ στήλλη ταῦτα γραφεῖσα λέγει·

[μηκ]έτι κλαῖε, πάτερ γλυκερώτατε, μηδ' ἔτι λυπο[ῦ]
[οἶ]κτρὸν ἐνὶ στέρνοις πένθος ἄλαστον ἔχων·
[οὐ γ]ὰρ ὑποχθόνιος κατὰ γῆς 'Αίδης με κέκευθε,
[ἀ]λλὰ Διὸς πάρεδρος ἀετὸς ἥρπασέ με
[πυρ]σῷ ὁμοῦ καὶ δάδι γεγηθότα, ἔνθα σύνεδρος
Φωσφόρῳ ἠδὲ καλῷ Ἑσπέρῳ ὄφρα πέλω·
[τοὔν]εκα καλλείψας τάδε δάκρυα θῦε, πάτερ μοι·
[ἀσ]τέρα γάρ μ' ἐσορᾶς ἵππῳ ἐφεζόμενον.

[*E*]*utyches · Aug*(*usti*) *· lib*(*ertus*) *· filio* [*dul*]*cissimo fecit.*

The relief (see fig. 1) presents a smiling child on a horse, dressed in a *chiton* and wearing a *bulla* (a type of amulet) around his neck. In his right hand he is raising what seems to be a torch. Above the horse's head an eagle is holding in its talons the reins, and in its beak an item that is difficult to identify: another part of the harness? A rope? A whip? The star above the boy indicates apotheosis, ascension to a better, astral world. Rarely do we have such an opportunity to read an epitaph directly commenting on a well preserved and elaborate funerary relief. As a whole, it most likely refers to the Dioscuri myth. The symbols of these divine sons of Zeus, the twins, were the morning star and the evening star, Phosphoros and Hesperos. They were portrayed as youths mounted on horses and frequently appeared on sarcophagi as guides for the deceased in the afterlife.[115] The first verses seem to suggest a peculiar theme in the deceased's heroisation. Unlike inscriptions on other tombs, this was not a reward for public services, or for virtues developed in the fields of art or science, because Eutychos died too young for such achievements. Instead the epitaph refers to his purity and innocence, the fact that he was untouched by evil or goodness.[116]

The Impact of Imperial Ideology

The Albanum tomb helps us better understand a certain mechanism propagating the idea of the deceased entering or being transformed into stars:

115 The monument presented the combination of heroisation and catasterism of the deceased, Guarducci 1969–1970, 240–242; Graf 1985, 134, n. 95.

116 Not necessarily, however, in strictly moral sense, Vérilhac 1978(2), 328–330 and 332; but see 17–18 and 380–381.

Figure 1. Funerary relief of Eutychos from Albanum in Latium, 3rd century AD.

the 'democratisation' of catasterism. The privilege of astral immortality originally only concerned selected heroes in mythology. With time the notion that outstanding individuals and even ordinary mortals were also placed among the stars became increasingly popular.[117] According to official Hellenistic ideology, Ptolemaic rulers did not die, but were instead taken up into the heavens and among the stars by gods (often the Dioscuri) who granted them immortality.[118] It is probable that such concepts influenced the concept of deifying Roman emperors, who also did not actually die but were taken alive to the heavens by gods. The symbolism of Zeus' eagle played an essential role during their funerals. An eagle was released from the top of the emperor's funeral pyre; apotheosis occurred with the ceremonial cremation of the emperor's body. In Greco-Roman times apotheosis among the stars was attributed to certain rulers, such as Julius Caesar or the emperor Augustus, as well as their favourites, such as Hadrian's Antinous.[119] Eutychos' stele is a clear example of how the imagery and symbolism of imperial apotheosis was adopted by the broader public in the Roman Empire, for he too is taken up to the heavens by an eagle.[120] From the time of the Roman Empire we can find other examples of this phenomenon on private tombs. A funerary epigram in Rome (2nd–3rd century AD) with a relief of an eagle states that the soul of Eudaimon, in the form of an eagle, flew up to the heavens.[121] Another funerary relief in Rome (2nd century AD) shows an eagle carrying a boy on its back. On the right side there is an altar, while pointing the way to the heavens, holding a burning torch in his hand, is a winged cupid (a symbol of the family's love?).[122] Similarly, surmounting the Roman funerary altar of Q. Volusius Antigonus there is an eagle and on either side there are masks with Phrygian caps (the so-called *pileus*).[123] It was usual to treat this as an allusion to Attis. R. Turcan, however, points to the imperial symbolism of the eagle taking the souls of emperors from the *rogus consecrationis*; Ganymede (i.e. the boy abducted by the eagle Zeus) also came from Phrygia and is more

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117 This could be a parallel to the more and democratic use of ἥρως in the Greco-Roman era, Lattimore 1942, 26–36; Cumont 1949, 183–184; Häusle 1989, 34–36 and *SEG*(39), no. 1781.

118 Cerfaux, Tondriau 1957, 338, n. 2; 414; Habicht 1970, 199–205. The abduction of Arsinoe by Zeus or Dioscuri is discussed by Wilcken 1938, 313–318; Nock 1957, 116; Cumont 1942, 67, n. 2; Cerfaux, Tondriau 1957, 199–200; Gigante Lanzara 2003.

119 For astral, imperial apotheosis, see Dorfbauer 2009, 144–169.

120 Walter 1956–1958; Engemann 1973, 31, n. 146; Scheid 1993.

121 *Peek GV*, no. 1615; *IGUR*(3), no. 1212. Soul as bird Nollé 1985, 128–133. For yet another example, von Moock 1998, 72–73, no. 309 in the catalogue; Gray 2002, 166–167.

122 Gradel 2002, 310–313; *ThesCRA*(2), 212, no. 393.

123 *CIL* 6.7377.

appropriate in this context than Attis.[124] The apotheosis of rulers was not just limited to catasterism. There is reason to believe that already Alexander the Great was posthumously worshiped as the 'new Heracles' and νέος Διόνυσος or νέος Ἥλιος.[125] Hellenistic rulers (the Ptolemaic and Attalid dynasties) were recognised as 'new Dionysuses.' A similar terminology was later also adopted by benefactors in the Greek East, who called themselves νέοι,[126] and by Roman emperors—Nero was called νέος ἀγαθὸς δαίμων, νέος Ἄπολλον and νέος Διόνυσος, while Drusilla appeared as νέᾱ Ἀφροδίτη and νέᾱ Νικηφόρος, etc.[127] And again, in tomb inscriptions also the deceased were described as new gods.[128] There was a 'new Heracles'[129] and a 'new Phaeton of Helicon.'[130] It is rather unlikely that this was authentic cult, worship of a new type of deities, νέοι θεοὶ. More probably this concerned titular prestige, to promote rulers after death or even during their lifetimes.

In my opinion there is a certain link between the emergence of the imperial cult and the development of specific types of the astral (and 'new god' type) apotheosis of the deceased. Some cases of astral apotheosis referred to the Hellenistic and Roman imperial traditions of the ruler's cult. No doubt such poetry above all appealed to people with social aspirations, including freed imperial slaves. The somewhat pretentious nature of the epitaph for Eutychos ideally suits the mentality of people of this sort. Many so-called mythological—i.e. referring to the deification of the dead—sarcophagi were procured by freed slaves, some of whom had indeed connections with the imperial court.[131] It is not without reason that the public manifestation of divine attributes (*consecratio in formam deorum*) was something that above all the freedmen, *libertini*, their wives and children would wish to do, because these people could not hold public office. Likewise there is a reason why inscriptions on the sarcophagi of senators would, rather than divine attributes, stress virtues associated with the senatorial office and *cursus*

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124 Turcan 1974, 723–724; see also 743–744 for the similar case of Aurelius Tertius' monument.

125 Cleopatra as 'new Isis' Plutarch, *Antonius* 54.9.

126 For νέοι θεοὶ, see Nock 1924, 108; Nock 1925, 93–94, n. 84; Seure 1929.

127 Cerfaux, Tondriau 1957, 133–134, 148–161, 162–163; Orth 1994, 163 and Dion 2006 on Augustus as *novum sidus*, Vergilius, *Georgica* 1.24–36.

128 Vérilhac 1978(2), 26–27.

129 *Peek GV*, no. 1247; Bernand 1969, no. 82.

130 *Peek GV*, no. 2000; *SGO*(4), no. 21/07/02; Agosti 2005, 6–9. For 'new Asclepius', Farnell 1921, 401; for new Demeter Tobin 1997, 82; Skenteri 2005, 35.

131 Nock 1924, 108, n. 10; Hampe 1972, 40–41; Engemann 1982; Zanker 1988; Scheid 1993; Ridgway 2000, 192–193 and 202–204.

honorum.[132] Then again, social pretensions shouldn't be overestimated; indeed, even among members of the social elite there are examples of identification with the gods.[133]

More importantly, the imperial cult brought far-reaching consequences of the political sort. In the Greek eastern provinces of the Roman Empire the granting of divine attributes to distinguished persons was discontinued, for this honour was now reserved for Roman emperors; henceforth the deceased were at best honoured as heroes. From now on the divine cult (ἰσόθεοι τιμαὶ) of ordinary citizens and Roman officials was a decidedly private matter, basically the mere prospect of a privileged afterlife. Cities honoured their citizens with heroic cults; thus honoured, they had their own priests, they were offered sacrifices, and also cult statues (ἀγάλματα) and modest shrines were raised for them.[134] This change had specific consequences on the way the dead were remembered. For example, although the *loci communes* repertoire of consolation decrees issued by Greek cities in the Greco-Roman East did not generally differ from other *loci* in ancient consolations, there was one very significant exception.[135] While they emphasised the abruptness with which the deceased was prematurely snatched from the living, none of the consolation decrees stated that the deceased was selected by gods or that, after death, he/she lived among deities, a theme that was so frequently found in funerary epigrams.[136] Clearly for political reasons Greco-Roman cities had to be cautious when referring to the supernatural or otherworldly attributes of distinguished citizens.[137] In the case of epigrams (together with awareness of the insurmountable difference between deities and mortals) this would explain the virtually total absence of directly declared apotheosis. Instead there were indirect references to the deceased's divinity by their association with the Ether and stars, or—even more frequently—various forms of their heroisation.

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132 Kleiner 1988; Wrede 2001; Hekster 2006, 34.

133 Hallett 2005, 263–264.

134 Price 1984, 34–36 and 47–52; Buraselis 2003, see *SEG* (54), no. 1895 and *EBGR* 2004, no. 35.

135 Ehrhardt 1994; Strubbe 1998; Bielman, Frei-Stolba 1998; Strubbe 1999; Canali De Rossi 2007.

136 The stress is put on the aristocratic self-restraint in mourning and on the dignified attitude in face of adversity.

137 Ehrhardt 1994, 49. For some puzzling evidence regarding political control over funerary commemoration, Kokkinia 2007, 169. It may have been also a natural consequence of the specific perspective from which the producers of decrees were looking at the deceased, as would-be officials, benefactors of their city, and noble ancestors for their families, Strubbe 1998, 74.

Elite and Popular Appeal

Furthermore, there were also a number of other factors contributing to the spread of celestial imagery in poetical epitaphs. We will now focus on a peculiar group of epigrams which actually does specify, sometimes with acute detail, the prospect of the deceased experiencing astral apotheosis. Epigrams stating that the dead end up in specific constellations, where some form of happiness after death awaits them, are very rare. Barely a few are known, as opposed to the far more popular idea of the soul returning to the Ether.[138] In the vicinity of Miletus, on a small base in Didyma there is an epigram from the late Hellenistic period that states the deliverance of the deceased by the god of the underworld, who has placed her among the stars:

> Stand before the tomb and look at the daughter of Diognetus,
> little Chorous, who did not make it to marriage:
> Hades placed her in the seventh circle of heaven,
> [though] neither parents nor stepfather did she manage to thank.
> Stranger, Moira and Tyche decided it to be.
> Moreover, farewell; what you see here will be our common fate.[139]

> σ̣τὰς πρόσθε τύμβου δέρκε τὴν ἀνύμφ[ι]⟨ο̣ν̣⟩
> κόρην Διογνήτοιο νηπίην Χοροῦν
> ἣν θῆκεν Ἅδης ἐγ κύκλοισιν ἑβδόμοι[ς]
> οὐ δοῦσαν οὐ γονεῦσιν, οὐ τροφεῖ χά[ριν.]
> ὦ ξεῖνε, ταῦτ' ἔκρανε Μοῖρα καὶ Τ[ύχη.]
> τὰ λοιπὰ χαῖρε, ἔρρωσο· κοινὰ γὰρ τά[δε.]

From Hellenistic Miletus also comes an epigram for the gymnasiarch Gorgias. The 'dream of forgetfulness' (the grave? Hades with its river Lethe?) had led his soul to heaven, and 'opposite the Pleiades with seven routes he placed you.' (ἐκοίμισεν ὕπνος ὁ λήθης, κἄντα ⟨π⟩ρὸς ἑπταπόρου στᾶσέ ⟨σ⟩ε ⟨Πλη⟩ϊά[δος]). The text suggests that this catasterism was a reward for great virtues and services rendered to the city.[140] On a marble column from the same city there is also the following epigram from the 1st–2nd century AD:

> [...] the water of Lethe,[141] Hermaios, you have not drunk,
> neither does this grave hide you, nor the gloomy home of Persephone,
> but Hermes with his beautiful ankles took your hand and led you to
> Olympus,

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[138] Guarducci 1947–1949; *BE* 1951, no. 250; Meiggs 1973, 466–467.
[139] *Peek GV*, no. 1264; *SGO*(1), no. 01/19/42.
[140] *Kaibel EG*, no. 223; *Peek GV*, no. 1485; *SGO*(1), no. 01/20/26.
[141] For this motif, Chaniotis 2000, 181, n. 43.

delivering you from human existence, [so] difficult to bear.
Eight years old, you gaze at the Ether, shining among the stars,
you rise close to the horn of Capricorn and the elbow [of Auriga].[142]
Now you appear to aid robust youths in the palaestra;
such a distinction you have been awarded by the blessed.[143]

οὐ Λήθης, Ἑρμα[ῖε, ποτὸν πίες,]
οὐδέ σ’ ἔκρυπτε [τύμβος ὅδε,] στυγνῆς δῶμα τ[ὸ Περσεφόν]ης,
ἀλλά σ’ ἔχων ἐς Ὄλυμπον ἀν[ήγαγεν] εὔσφυρος Ἑρμῆς,
ἐκ χαλεπ[οῦ] μερόπων ῥυσάμενος βιότου·
αἰθέρα δ’ ὀκταέτης κατιδὼν ἄστροις ἅμα λάμπεις
πὰρ κέρας ὠλενίης Αἰγὸς ἀνερχόμενος
παισί τε νῦν ἐπαρωγὸς ἐνὶ σθεναραῖσι παλαίστραις
φαίνῃ, σοὶ μακάρων τοῦτο χαριζομένων.

It is striking that both epigrams come from Miletus and that both refer to καταστερισμός in such an original way.[144] The two are so exceptionally precise in locating the deceased among the stars: one in the Pleiades, and the other near Capricorn. The key to their interpretation probably lies in a specific, astral understanding of the Elysian Fields. On account of its shape, the Pleiades cluster was sometimes also called Botrys, meaning a bunch of grapes. The grapes symbolised a joyous banquet, presided over by Dionysius himself. The precisely defined celestial topography in Hermaios' epigram suggests the joy and happiness experienced by the deceased. The goat-nymph Amalthea, who with milk and honey fostered the infant Zeus in the mountains of Crete, as a reward was placed among the stars. She became a constellation (*Aix Olenie, Capra* and *Capella*), while her horn came to symbolise food and abundance. The *scholia* to Callimachus' *Hymns* state that one of the horns offered nectar, while the other ambrosia.[145] At the same time the term 'Amalthea's horn' was used to describe a region abundant with greenery, flowers, fruits and water, which in turn could suggest the paradisiacal aspect of the Elysian Fields. This means that when, after death, the boy

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142 That is, the constellations.

143 *Peek GV*, no. 1829; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 200 (different interpretation); *SGO*(1), no. 01/20/29.

144 Moreover, in both one can discern undertones of known literature, namely Aratus' *Phaenomena* (4th–3rd century BC). For this reason R. Merkelbach has concluded that both epigrams were written by the same author. However, this is only a hypothesis and certain differences between the two epigrams speak against it. The river Lethe and forgetfulness in the two epigrams play different roles. Moreover, in Gorgias' epigram there is no explicit mention of the deceased becoming a star. Finally, their dating is different.

145 Scholia to Callimachus' *Hymni* 1.49.

found himself in this region, he received total care and lacked nothing. Thus in both epigrams the named constellations evoke the happiest aspects of life after death, one in the form of a banquet,[146] while the other in the form of a flowery meadow.

Yet it is interesting to note a certain lack of consistency in the epigram for Hermaios. He became a hero, while his former sports companions recognised him as their guardian 'angel,' just like once Heracles and Hermes had been recognised as the guardians and patrons of gymnasia.[147] But his reaching Olympus is not consistent with his simultaneously turning into a star, and even less with his role as a helper in the palaestra. In this accumulation of myths and symbols one can see a mixture of simple folk beliefs (the deceased as a guardian spirit) with much more refined beliefs (astral mysticism and souls entering the heavens). This reveals an interesting 'democratisation' of ideas concerning entering the Ether and existing among stars.

For an educated person the doctrine of deliverance was one where the individual's self diffused into a higher order of nature, one comprehending the world and symbolised by cosmic, astral order and beauty. The individual's new self found happiness in the afterlife not in the form of carnal and material delights, but in the subtle contemplation of something like the world of ideas as described in the teachings of Plato[148] and the Neoplatonists.[149] A good example of such an understanding of the afterlife is a series of inscriptions, including an extensive epigram, honouring the priest Epitynchanos (Phrygia, 313 AD). The inscriptions document the activities of a circle of mystics/priests who believed in a form of astral deliverance. The deceased was to find joy in the celestial rotations of the stars and planets in the Ether, from which we all once came.[150] A subtle allusion to such beliefs is

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[146] See Herrmann 1998, no. 754; *SGO*(1), no. 01/20/27, from Miletus, where Athena leads the dead among the gods as their table companion.

[147] For the funerary cult in gymnasia, Berger 1990, 271–273; Thériault 2003, 249–251; in stadiums Rife 2008, 116–117; for the cult of Hermes in gymnasia, Aneziri, Damaskos 2004, see *EBGR* 2004, no. 5.

[148] Plato, *Respublica* 2.363d.

[149] See the famous theosophical oracle from Oenoanda, 'Born of itself, untaught, without a mother, unshakeable, not contained in a name, known by many names, dwelling in fire, this is god. We, his angels, are a small part of god. To you who ask this question about god, what his essential nature is, he has pronounced that aether is god who sees all. To him you should pray at dawn, gazing on him and looking towards the sunrise.' transl. A. Chaniotis ([α]ὐτοφυής, ἀδίδακτος, ἀμήτωρ, ἀστυφέλικτος, οὔνομα μὴ χωρῶν, πολυώνυμος, ἐν πυρὶ ναίων. τοῦτο θεός, μεικρὰ δὲ θεοῦ μερὶς ἄνγ̣ε̣λο̣ι ἡμεῖς. τοῦτο πευθομένοισι θεοῦ πέρι ὅστις ὑ̣π̣ά̣ρχ̣ε̣ι Α̣ἰ[θ]έ̣[ρ]α πανδερκ̣[ῆ] [θε]ὸν ἔννεπεν, εἰς ὃν ὁρῶντας εὔχεσθ' ἠῴους πρὸς ἀντολίην ἐσορῶ[ν]τα̣[ς]). Also, the comments by Robert 1971; Livrea 1998; Busine 2005, 35–40, 203–208, 423.

[150] *Peek GV*, no. 1487; *SGO*(3), no. 16/31/10; Hirschmann 2003; *EBGR* 2003, no. 71.

recorded in an epigram written in Greek but with Latin letters on a sarcophagus from Ravenna (3rd–4th century AD) for a worshipper of Isis, Tetratia Isias, and her daughter, Sosia Iuliane. On the way to the afterlife the soul of the deceased will hear the singing of the stars in the sky, i.e. the music of the spheres, but in the meantime a faint echo of this music will be the song she now plays on her lyre, like a swallow.[151]

It is possible that the attractiveness of catasterism was also due to the fact it was a preliminary stage or level eventually leading to the highest destination of the gods, i.e. Mount Olympus, the heavens or the Ether.[152] This preliminary stage was easier to achieve. It should also be stressed that the seemingly abstract idea of melting into the Ether was only superficially in contrast to the notion of individual apotheosis as assumed in catasterism. As with the kidnapping of the deceased by deities, so too the concept of returning to the Ether was, in a sense, actually a negation of death. Thus we read in an epigram from Neoklaudiopolis (2nd–3rd century AD):

> You hurried, Domnina, to be among the immortals, unconcerned for your husband;
> in the stars in the sky your body was purified.
> No one will say you died, but that the immortals abducted you,
> when your native [city] you wanted to protect from disease.
> Bless you, may your heart be joyful in the Elysian Fields;
> you leave behind your companions in sadness and eternal lament.[153]

> σπεύ[σασ᾽] ἐς ἀθ[ανά]τους δό[μους], ἀνδρὸς δ᾽ ἀμελήσασ᾽
> ἀστράσιν οὐρανίοις σῶμα καθηραμένη·
> οὔτις ἐρî μερόπων ὅτι δὴ θάνες, ἀλλ᾽ ὅτι πάτρην
> ῥυομένην νούσων ἅρπασαν ἀθάνατοι·
> χαῖρε καὶ ᾿Ηλυσίοις ἐπιτέρπεο, σοῖς δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἑταίροις
> λύπας καὶ θρήνους κάλλιπες ἀϊδ⟨ί⟩ους.

Here we notice yet another aspect of entering the Ether. It meant (even without direct reference to the notion) that the deceased found themselves among hundreds of other stars, thus the 'self' of the deceased was situated amid a multitude of sympathetic beings. An interesting epigram on a limestone stele (base?) from Massalia (modern Marseille) in 3rd century AD Gaul expresses this thought rather well:

> Passer-by [halt you step?], I call out to you,
> a youth dear to god—no longer a mortal—

151 *Peek GV*, no. 1951.
152 Peres 2003, 86–89 (on 'Verstirnung').
153 *Peek GV*, no. 1486; *SGO*(2), no. 11/03/02; Samama 2003, no. 324.

still unmarried, at a young age akin to
the gods of Amyklai,[154] the saviours of sailors;
I too was a sailor and enjoyed the sea waves.
But when, thanks to the piety of my guardians, this grave I received,
I was freed from the diseases, sufferings, concerns and difficulties
that continually afflict the bodies of the living.
Among the dead there are two companies: one wanders the earth,
the other advances in the procession of heavenly constellations.
I belong to this other band, having acquired god as my leader.[155]

[traces of letters] ἴχνεσι [–]ịον, ὁδεῖτα·
κοῦρος ἐγὼ καλέω σε θεῷ φίλος, οὐκέτι θνητός,
ἠίθεος κούροισιν ὁμηλικίῃ πανόμοιος
πλωτήρων σωτῆρσιν Ἀμυκλαίοισι θεοῖ[ς]ιν,
πλωτὴρ καὐτọ̀ς ἐών, πόντου τ' ἐνὶ [κ]ύμασι[ν] ἥσθην.
εὐσεβίῃ τροφέων [δὲ] λαχὼν τόδε σῆμα [π]έπαυμαι
νούσων καὶ καμάτοιο καὶ ἄχθεος ἠδὲ πόνοιο·
ταῦτα γὰρ ἐν ζωοῖσιν ἀμείλιχα σάρκες ἔχουσιν.
ἐν δὲ τεθνε[ι]ῶσιν ὁμηγύριẹσ̣ γε πέλουσιν
δοιαί· τῶν ἑτέρη μὲν ἐπιχθονίη πεφόρηται,
ἡ δ' ἑτέρη τείρεσσι σὺν αἰθερίοισι χορεύει·
ἧς στρατιῆς εἷς εἰμ[ι], λαχὼν θεὸν ἡγεμονῆα.

The sailor's tomb points to two types of deceased. One type remains on earth, the other turns into stars. 'The gods of Amyklai,' i.e. the Dioscuri, with whom the deceased is associated, appear in the skies as the Gemini (Twin) constellation; when one of the stars disappears behind the horizon, the other appears.[156] Thus, particularly in Roman culture (with frequent representations on sarcophagi), the Dioscuri were significant as symbols of overcoming human limitations and acquiring divine immortality as a reward for services.[157]

Another example of this kind is the adorned relief of a funerary stele from Marathon (judging by the style, from the Antonine epoch):

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154 The city in Sparta.

155 *Kaibel EG*, no. 650; *Peek GV*, no. 1329; Decourt 2004, no. 10. In *Peek GV*, no. 1946; *IK*(9), no. 195; *SGO*(2), no. 09/05/14 the dead ascends to the Ether to στρατεύωμαι.

156 See Euripides, *Helena* 140; *Orestes* 1629–1637, and ad loc. Pucci 2005, 62–63.

157 We do not know the identity of the supreme god mentioned in the epitaph, but it could well have been Zeus. See Zeus as the heavenly leader of the gods and souls in Plato, *Phaedrus* 246e: 'The supreme leader in the heavens is Zeus. He goes at the head, in a winged chariot, arranging and managing everything, and behind him comes the host of gods and spirits, in an orderly array of eleven squadrons.' transl. R. Waterfield (ὁ μὲν δὴ μέγας ἡγεμὼν ἐν οὐρανῷ Ζεύς, ἐλαύνων πτηνὸν ἅρμα, πρῶτος πορεύεται, διακοσμῶν πάντα καὶ ἐπιμελούμενος· τῷ δ' ἕπεται στρατιὰ θεῶν τε καὶ δαιμόνων). In funerary epigrams, Gatier, Vérilhac 1966, 348.

Paramonos, son of Euodos, from Piraeus, Athenian ephebe.

I have felt joy often in my few years.
Along with many men, I lie below, struck by a deep sleep.
With Castor and Pollux, I hold a place among the stars.
I am the new Theseus.
(transl. C. Leigh Gray, with revisions by A. Chaniotis, per. litt.)[158]

Παράμονος Εὐόδου Πειρεύς ἔφηβος ᾿Αθηναῖος

πλειστάκις εὐφρανθεὶς ὀλίγοις ἔτεσιν μετὰ πολλῶν,
ὧδε κάτω κεῖμαι βαθεῖ βεβλημένος ὕπνῳ
συν Κάστορι καὶ Πολυδεύκῃ ἄστρων Χῶρον ἔχων,
Θησεύς εἶμι νέος.

Theseus was regarded as the model of Athenian ephebes, and this is why the deceased Paramonos was called 'the new Theseus.'

Ordinary people, in believing that the souls of their kith and kin entered the Ether, where they became stars, assumed that they could be viewed from earth. In other words, they assumed the possibility of easy 'communication' between the living and the dead, because the departed had not really departed after all. All it took to find them was to look up at the night sky. Thus the concept of returning to the Ether could easily function on two, quite different levels: as a concept of 'physics,' philosophy and mysticism, but also as a product of popular beliefs. Souls were dispersed particles of the Ether which united after death to become stars. This meant personalising a fairly impersonal concept (by locating a particular place in the heavens for a particular deceased person), and thus the concept was easier to propagate. This is well expressed in an epigram to a boy named Aster ('star') attributed to Plato himself:

Once you used to shine, a morning star, among the living;
now you shine, an evening star, among the dead. (transl. R. Knox)[159]

᾿Αστὴρ πρὶν μὲν ἔλαμπες ἐνὶ ζωοῖσιν ῾Εῷος·
νῦν δὲ θανὼν λάμπεις ῞Εσπερος ἐν φθιμένοις.

The brightness of the Ether was also supposed to compensate for the loss of daylight, the subject of frequent lamentations in funerary epigrams. The souls of the deceased desired a different light, one that was eternal.[160] On

158 Von Moock 1998, 69, no. 495 in the catalogue; Gray 2002, 150–153.

159 *AP* 7.670, and the references in Hoffmann 1978, 48, n. 128.

160 Peres 2003, 109. The idea of light as the manifestation of divine presence is discussed by Richardson 1974, 26–29; see [τὰν ἀπα]λὰν κεύθει μορφὰν τάφος, ἀλλ' ἀμά[ραντον] [πνεῦμ]α μένει κείνας ἐς φάος ἀθάνατ[ον] in *Kaibel EG*, no. 250; *Peek GV*, no. 848; *CIRB*, no. 124. For the

a tomb from Ostia from the Greco-Roman period the immortal spirit flies into the Ether amid the bright rays of Zeus, and the afterlife is portrayed as a world of light.[161] In the extant fragments of an epigram on a tomb from Magara (4th–5th century AD) the soul of the deceased rises into the Ether:

> The body of Nicocrates is hidden in earthly womb,
> his heart was raised to the divine aether.
> Thanks to thee, Pluto, kindly deity, for this destiny. Gentle
> and lovable, a favourite with all was the son of Callitychus;
> now another and a divine light receives him.
> (transl. P. Gardner with the revisions by A. Chaniotis, per. litt.)[162]

> Νικοκράτους λαγόνεσσιν ὑπὸ χθονίαισι κέκρυπτε
> σῶμα, κέαρ δ' ἀνόρουσε πρὸς αἰθέρα δῖαν ἀερθέν.
> σοὶ δὲ χάρις, Πλουτε⟨ῦ⟩, ἀκάκῃ θε⟨ῶ⟩ι, εἵνεκα μοίρης
> πρηῢν ḳαὶ γλυκύθυμον, ἀγαλλόμενον μάλα πᾶσιν
> υἱὸν Καλλιτύχοιο μένει αἴθρης φάος ἄλλο.

This wonderful brightness also symbolised the beauty of the deceased themselves, which could be treated with appropriate veneration as something related to the divine beauty of the stars and the Ether. To the Greeks, the gods—whether they were presented as stars or traditional mythological figures—were beings radiant with glory, and their immortality was imagined as shining splendour that never fades. To say that the ones who have died untimely, premature death were now gods was tantamount to attributing them an timeless, marvellous beauty.

identification of φῶς with ζωή, Lameere 1993, 265, n. 2. For the human soul interpreted as light or sunray (Aristotle, Pythagoreans), Kaufman 1897, 20, n. 1.

161 Kaibel 1879, no. 718a. See also Olympus as 'full of light' (αἴθρη) in *SGO*(2), no. 11/07/15; Stauber, Merkelbach 2001, no. 7.

162 *Kaibel EG*, no. 462; *Peek GV*, no. 1903.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DEAD AS HEROES

Heroic Iconography: Limits of Testimony

In this section I shall address the question of heroisation of dead family members in verse-inscriptions. A short survey of the most important appearances will follow the presentation of the larger context, that is a survey of earlier and contemporary testimonies of heroisation. Then (in two chapters) the scholarly communis opinio will be presented with argumentation as it is put forward in this domain. The final chapters in this section focus on the vexing question of whether some of these 'private,' unofficial heroisations can be classed as cultic, religious practices, or whether they all were symbolic acts, better explained by notions of idealisation and grateful appreciation on the part of the living. Having considered the bigger picture I come to the conclusion that in some of the instances, where heroisation retained (or purported to retain) its traditional, cultic qualities, it became a model sufficiently meaningful to express beliefs and hopes of a future immortality. In this way those who heroised their dead showed belief in an afterlife. As such, however, the concept of a recently deceased person as heros (ἥρως) underscored the youthful, godlike beauty and charm of the dead, regardless of their actual age at death.

Possible (and debated) evidence of heroisation in the strict sense of the word, i.e. the hero-cult, consists of a wide array of testimonies, dated to Classical, Hellenistic and Greek-Roman periods. It is sometimes thought to be found in heroic iconography on funerary reliefs. Later (Hellenistic) instances include the word ἥρως appearing on tombs and hero-cult foundations recorded in wills; funerary epigrams with heroic themes make a slightly later (Greek-Roman period) phenomenon.

Since the 5th–4th centuries BC there was an increase in the appearance of 'heroic' themes on the tombs of the 'ordinary' deceased (i.e. not only on votive reliefs). This heroic imagery may be divided into two basic themes: the warrior, hunter or rider (*heros equitans*), or the reveller at a banquet (so-called 'Totenmahlreliefs'), usually presented as a figure (or pair of figures) seated on a throne, holding a κάνθᾰρος (a type of goblet). The first evidence of the *heros equitans* theme appeared in the Greek East in the 6th

century BC. The greatest number of such reliefs comes from the Black Sea region, Thrace and Asia Minor, particularly in the northwest. Probably originating from votive reliefs, they depicted a mounted warrior or one leading a horse, alternatively a hunter (alluding to the aristocratic ἀρετή), who frequently held a spear. Typical imagery also included: a snake wound around a tree, an altar, the figure of a woman and the figure of a servant. The votive quality of such reliefs was also sometimes emphasised with the presence of worshippers. One of the characteristic variants presents a rider holding a chalice in his right hand before an altar (again an allusion to the votive aspect), behind which a woman submits an offering. Hiding in a tree next to the altar is a huge snake. These heroic themes are usually interpreted in two ways: either as chthonic symbols or as status symbols of the aristocratic way of life. For example, the horse was a symbol of chthonic might, but was also a sign of the aristocratic lifestyle. The spear could represent death in the battlefield or rather the deceased's valour. Among the most common funerary relief scenes were also 'Totenmahlreliefs', depicting banquet revellers raising chalices. It was usual to show the deceased reclining on a bed, frequently raising a chalice, probably as a libation in honour of gods or heroes. There would also be a food-laden table. A woman would frequently be seated to the left of the deceased or at his feet. And there would sometimes also be small figures of servants (e.g. serving the deceased with wine), worshippers or relatives. Such scenes appeared on funerary reliefs from the 3rd–2nd centuries BC right up to Late Antiquity[1] throughout the Greek world, but particularly in Asia Minor and on the Islands.[2] With time these banquet scenes (as possible chthonic or heroic symbols) acquired additional elements: a horse's head in a square in the top left corner of the relief, the armour and weapons of the deceased in the background, a dog, and a snake, either under the table or wound round a tree. However, there are fundamental problems with interpreting particular themes. For example, according to some scholars the images of a snake slithering out of a grave or an urn to receive submitted offerings symbolised the heroised deceased as chthonic deities.[3] However, doubts are raised when we consider that such images could equally well have an apotropaic meaning.[4] In all probability the feast scenes were derived

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[1] Benoit 1954; Cremer 1991, 56–58, 70–74; Fabricius 1999, 67–68.

[2] In a way, this resembles the evolution of the heroes concept—first demigods, then outstanding individuals, and then the common dead, Guarducci 1962.

[3] Schneider 1969, 217 and references in n. 2. See also Kurtz, Boardman 1971, 234; Mitropoulou 1976.

[4] Fraser 1977, 38–40.

from the votive iconography of the 6th century to the start of the 3rd century BC. Since these images in honour of mythical and local heroes (e.g. Theseus, the Dioscuri or Asclepius) and gods (e.g. Pluto or Persephone) seem to be the nearest equivalent of the banquet scenes on funerary reliefs, it is sometimes assumed that they symbolised the heroisation of the deceased. But that is just a theory. The 'heroic' feast could symbolise not only the hero status of the deceased or their happiness in the afterlife, but also their social status in the world of the living or even a banquet held in their honour. Either way, there does not seem to be any obvious correlation between the 'heroic' imagery presented in reliefs and the term ἥρως used in funerary epitaphs and epigrams as well as hero-cult foundations. The interpretation of individual presentations of such symbols remains open. It is difficult to state with all certainty which of the various representations referred to a hero-cult for the deceased.[5]

According to some scholars, the simplest and most common way of expressing hero-cults for the deceased in the Hellenistic period was the construction of funerary altars. This is suggested by the fact that at the start of the epoch the word ἡρῷον began being used in reference to tombs.[6] From the Hellenistic to the Roman period, especially in Asia Minor, Macedonia and on the islands of the Aegean Sea, tombs frequently took the form of altars or temples. Large monuments were also erected, initially—as is presumed—for heroes and dynasts, and later for distinguished and thus heroised citizens of πόλεις.[7] Sometimes they took the form of temples mounted on podiums. More frequently, however, expressing the cult status of a tomb took the form of a τέμενος, of altars adorned with boukrania and garlands (e.g. on Rhodes) or richly decorated sarcophagi and urns.[8] Still, we must remember that this is only a theory. We cannot be certain that we are really dealing with manifestations of authentic heroisations of the dead.[9]

5 Himmelmann 1990, 115–116. For heroic motifs in art (as 'veneration' rather than 'actual ritual'), Ridgway 2000, 192–193, 202–204, 217, n. 13; Hallett 2005, 30–60.

6 Kubińska 1968, 26–31; Guarducci 1967–1978(3), 152–153.

7 Dyggve, et al. 1934; Dyggve 1951; Frantz, et al. 1969; Kurtz, Boardman 1971, 299–302. For *heroa*, Kader 1995.

8 Guarducci 1967–1978(3), 134–138.

9 Waelkens 1983. P.M. Fraser has emphatically denied that are any grounds to treat the altars on Rhodes as convincing archaeological evidence of the heroisation of the recently deceased, Fraser 1977, 77–78, contra Kurtz, Boardman 1971, 301. See also Daux 1972, 504–506; Hiller 1975.

Ἥρως on Tombs and in Funerary Foundations

Since the start of the Hellenistic epoch numerous epitaphs referred to the deceased as heroes. Recently departed family members were often 'heroised.' Beside the deceased's name there would appear the title, depending on the sex, ἥρως, alternatively ἡρωίς, ἡρώϊσσα or ἡρωίνη.[10] In epitaphs sons called their fathers heroes, so too parents with regard to their deceased children, wives in reference to their deceased husbands, or any other departed members of the family. And this concerned ordinary people, because these were not outstanding personalities. Hero status could be achieved by members of all social classes and groups. After death, even a slave could be considered by his companions to be a hero.[11] Likewise women were heroised, even for services such as being a good housewife.[12] This title became particularly popular during the Roman Empire period, especially in Boeotia (though not, for instance, in Thespiae), in Thessaly as well as some regions in Asia Minor and on certain Aegean islands, such as Rhodes or Thera.[13] It has been estimated that approximately a quarter of all tomb inscriptions using the term ἥρως come from Asia Minor.[14]

The mere use of the word ἥρως on a tomb certainly does not allow us, however, to assume that the deceased was actually heroised and had his/her own cult.[15] As some scholars stress, the only real evidence of a given person being heroised, i.e. given the cult of a demigod, would be a decree or tomb inscription containing concrete information regarding the organization of such a cult.[16] Without a reference to the act of heroisation or mention of relevant rituals one cannot assume that a hero-cult existed. Such acts and rituals were a part of another new phenomenon in the Hellenistic

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[10] No thorough study of the subject exists. It was planned by Robert 1940–1965(11–12), 573, n. 4, on his way to the intended monograph *Les bienfaiteurs dans les cités grecques*. It was announced by H. Hepding, but only the summary of his lecture was published, Hepding 1925. G. Thériault prepares a study of the benefactors' cult in the Greek cities, see Thériault 2001 and *EBGR* 2002, no. 146. In the meantime, see Farnell 1921, 361–372; Guarducci 1935; Rose 1953; Fraser 1977, 76–81; Pircher 1979, 59 and n. 3; Graf 1985, 127–135; Burkert 1985, 206; Schmidt 1991, 141–146; Hughes 1999; Peres 2003, 89–96; Strubbe 2004; Jones 2010, 48–83.

[11] *TAM*(2.2), no. 466.

[12] *Kaibel EG*, no. 189; *Peek GV*, no. 1128. For the 'privatisation' of virtues of the dead, Zumin 1961, 213; Schmidt 1991, 117–148.

[13] Regarding Thera, see Gerousi 2003 and *EBGR* 2004, no. 91.

[14] Lattimore 1942, 97–100; the list 97–98, n. 77; some additional examples Buckler, Robinson 1914, 40; Robinson 1938, 61–63; Robinson 1945, 40.

[15] See, e.g. Herodes Atticus honouring Regilla and Polydeukes as heroes, but without resorting to the official title ἥρως, Skenteri 2005, 29–65; see also *Kaibel EG*, no. 120.

[16] Fraser 1977, 77–78; Vérilhac 1978(2), 315, n. 123.

age: special hero-cult foundations together with affiliated funerary and cult associations.[17] These were founded by private citizens, as opposed to the official, public institutions of heroising distinguished persons by cities—something which dated back to the Classical age.[18]

The matter is complicated by the fact that the heroisation of the dead is sometimes divided into two categories: 'official' and 'private'.[19] The term 'official' would indicate that the deceased was heroised publicly, in the name of an entire community, e.g. with a πόλις or κώμη decree. In practical terms the difference was that in public heroisation the entire community made funerary offerings, not just the family of the deceased.[20] There are numerous extant inscriptions honouring persons post mortem, where the δῆμος paid tribute to the deceased with wreaths and by granting them the title of hero in a public act of heroisation (ἀφηρωισμός). The text usually began with the words δῆμος ἀφηρώιζε.[21] In Thera (1st century AD) there is an extensive inscription certifying the heroisation of the priest of Apollo by the δῆμος.[22] In Thyatira (Lydia, 1st century AD) there is a prose inscription recording the fact that the δῆμος raised a Xenoneon for Gaios Xenon as a hero; though here there is no mention of offerings.[23] Both these people had served their communities, for which the communities expressed gratitude by honouring them as heroes, a title that in earlier times had formally been attributed to the most outstanding individuals. Specifically worded dedications to such deceased heroes are not infrequently found in funerary inscriptions. Nevertheless, it is generally difficult to make a clear distinction between public and private heroisation. In some regions the word ἥρως appeared on tomb inscriptions without any mention of a dedication, public or private. It is probable that ultimately the laying of offerings to a new hero was left for their relatives to decide. Many—if not the majority—of the honours of

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17 See generally Laum 1914(1), 68–87, 157; Mannzmann 1962, 147–161 on 'Verewigungstendenz'. See also Rohde 1925, 554, n. 18; Kamps 1937; Nilsson 1955–1961(2), 115–117; Veyne 1976, 241–251; Sherwin-White 1977, 210–213; Schmitt-Pantel 1982; Jones 1983, together with comments in *BE* 1984, no. 402; ibidem, 1989, no. 631; Hopkins 1983, 247–255, for Roman counterparts; Price 1984, 35–36; Nijf 1997, 31–69, especially 61–68; Fabricius 1999, 70–83 and 106–108; Hame 1999, 115–117.

18 Boehringer 1996; Boehringer 2001 and Bremmer 2006.

19 Pleket 1958, 28–31; Habicht 1970, 105, n. 10; Fraser 1977; Herrmann 1995.

20 A. Chaniotis, per. litt.

21 Loch 1895, 282–284; Farnell 1921, 343–344; Wrede 1971; Koller 1973; Chaves Tristán 1978; Vérilhac 1978(2), 321–323; Graf 1985, 121–137; Burkert 1985, 206; Speyer 1988, especially 868–869.

22 *Peek GV*, no. 1010, see Nicosia 1996.

23 *IGRR*(4), no. 1276; Keil, von Premerstein 1911, no. 74; *TAM*(5.2), no. 1098.

heroisation visible to the public, i.e. tombs, statues and images, were funded by private individuals or associations. Such associations presented their dead as heroes to the city, or alternatively the πόλις recognised someone as a hero on the basis of a formal application from a private individual.[24] For example, towards the end of the 2nd century BC the δῆμος of the city of Aegiale (on the island of Amorgos), by order of a special decree, passed an act heroising (ἀφηρωισμός) a certain Aleximachos, in return for donations to the city made by his father, Critolaos.[25] Henceforth every year in the hero's honour the city's gymnasium was to hold a public banquet and games with the participation of ephebes, which were open to all (i.e. citizens, metics and Romans). The day before the games, in a special procession, members of the πρυτανεῖα (city magistrates' office), the gymnasiarch and the ephebes led a bull, to be sacrificed (θύειν) before the statue of the heroised Aleximachos. The meat of the sacrificed bull, together with a large portion of grain, served as a reward for the winner of the games. A good example of how public and private heroisation were linked is found in an epigram from Thera (1st–2nd century AD), where a husband honours his deceased wife as a heroine. The epigram's introduction states that the βουλά and δῆμος heroised Basiloklea, yet the main epigram text states that she was heroised by her husband.[26]

Either way it seems that the founding of hero-cults for the recently deceased by private individuals or associations was fairly widespread, particularly in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. Apart from Critolaos' donations, the most extensive epigraphic testimony of heroisation and of a private, posthumous cult of family members as part of a special κοινὸν is the famous 'Will of Epicteta,' which has survived in an inscription (c. 200 BC) on Thera. It includes detailed instructions concerning the decoration of a sanctuary for the Muses (Μουσεῖον), including statues of Epicteta and her relatives.[27] In accordance with the wishes of her deceased husband, Phoenix, the Μουσεῖον which he had begun building in honour of his predeceased son, Cratesilochos, wasstill to be completed. Within it were to be installed the statues of the Muses, as well as of Phoenix, Cratesilochos and Andragoras, his other son, who had died in the meantime. The testament also allocated funds

[24] See e.g. *Kaibel EG*, no. 774; *CEG*(2), no. 854; *SGO*(1), no. 03/01/01.

[25] *IG*(12.7), no. 515; Sokolowski 1962, no. 61; Graf 1985, 131–132; Sève 1996; Fabricius 1999, 73–74; Helmis 2003 and *EBGR* 2004, no. 109. Parallel testimonies: *Peek GV*, no. 1197; *Kaibel EG*, no. 222; *Kaibel EG*, no. 222; *Peek GV*, no. 48; Sève 1996.

[26] *Peek GV*, no. 1197.

[27] *IG*(12.3), no. 330; Wittenburg 1990; numerous corrections *BE* 1991, no. 426; Stavrianopoulou 2006, 290–302.

for the association (κοινὸν) of male relatives as well as for priestly functions concerning the Muses and heroes, which were to be performed by her daughter's son and his descendants. Every year, during a three-day celebration inside the Μουσεῖον, sacrifices were to be made to the goddesses, Epicteta's two sons, her husband and Epicteta herself. In the 'testament' all the deceased are referred to as ἥρωες. The priest was to provide wine, garlands, music and olive oil. The text stipulates that sacrificial offerings of animals, cakes and cheese were to be made in honour of the deceased. Some of the sacrificial offerings (θυσία) were to be consumed by ordinary members of the κοινὸν, and some by officials.

In addition to this epigraphic evidence, there is yet another category of archaeological evidence of hero-cults for the dead, but it still needs to be properly researched. It is probable that some of the monumental sepulchres from Hellenistic times, e.g. the *heroon* in Calydon (end of 2nd century BC), were linked with the establishment of private foundations. No doubt sacrificial offerings were made there and there were feasts in honour of the heroes entombed within, in a similar fashion to that specified in Epicteta's will.[28] Naturally, foundations of this sort, the magnificent *heroa* and expensive rituals were the preserve of the social elite.[29] The founders were usually the wealthiest citizens of cities who wished to be remembered as the greatest benefactors, ones deserving posthumous honours.

Heroisation in Funerary Epigrams

Funerary epigrams referring to the heroisation of the deceased started becoming popular in the 1st century BC, though most of them originate from the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. Thus there is a considerable time difference between epigrams and prose-written epitaphs using the word ἥρως, as these had appeared already at the start of the Hellenistic period.[30] The geographical distribution of such epigrams is also different: Greece proper, the Islands and Asia Minor, but also Egypt, Crete and in Rome. For these reasons one

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28 Especially in Macedonia and Asia Minor; about the 'democratisation' of such establishments Hughes 1999, 169.

29 *Intra muros* burials constitute a parallel phenomenon, which still has not been studied properly. In the meantime see Price 1984, 47; Garland 1985, 88–89; Graf 1985, 133 and especially note 89; Cremer 1991, 56–58. Some interesting testimonies from Macedonia Themelis 2000, on which *EBGR* 2000, no. 195.

30 Hughes 1999, 171. For heroisation in funerary epigrams, Pfohl 1983, 489–490; Le Bris 2001, 97–112.

may suspect that there is no straightforward continuity between these two types of evidence concerning heroisation. On the other hand, recording the term ἥρως in a short, prose-written epitaph was probably a 'cheaper' way of proclaiming heroisation not only in relation to the founding of a hero-cult, but also in relation to more expensive epigrams.

In particular, we shall consider those epigrams which not only speak of the deceased becoming a new hero after death, but also of the deceased's hero-cult.[31] An epigram for the writer Ammonios who had died fighting (Egypt, late Hellenistic) states that as a hero he should be offered sacrifices befitting gods.[32] The deceased's grave was compared to a temple.[33] An epigram from Nikaia in Bithynia (in the Turkish region of Bunaklar, later Sancakaya on the Sangarios, 1st–2nd century AD) makes an allusion to a cult with regard to the burial of a woman next to an altar. It is probable that this is a reference to a genuine heroisation because the husband considers his deceased wife to be immortal (ἀθανάτην νομίσας).[34] An epigram from Rome (3rd–4th century AD) states that the grave is the site of the cult of heroines, i.e. the wife of Aeneas and his sister; their burial site is referred to as the Isles of the Blessed.[35]

One particular inscription has attracted more scholarly attention than others of this sort, a clear reflection of the complexity of the subject matter under consideration. A 1st-century AD epigram from Itanos on Crete addressed the parents of three 'pure heroes' (ἥρωες ἁγνοὶ), Damon, Pheidon and Ammonios. The epigram provides a lot of information regarding their heroisation:

> Three children we lie here together, brothers, pure heroes: Damon, Pheidon, and Ammonios, mighty sons [...] Now we have acquired a temple and sacred heroes' grove as gratitude from our country; and we have become by popular decree sacred heroes. Be consoled, good parents, put an end to care [...]

[31] In the Hellenistic epigram from Rhodes we hear about the sacrifices being presented on the tomb, which suggests the heroisation of the dead, *Peek GV*, no. 1451; Fraser 1977, 23, n. 101; 103, 129–130, n. 203; Cassio 1994, 114; similar is *IG*(12.5), no. 305, see the comments by Lattimore 1942, 127. See also libations postulated for the deceased Herois, Cabanes, Ceka 1997, no. 238; *EBGR* 1997, no. 54. Usually, however, we deal with formulas of the sort we find in *Kaibel EG*, no. 296; *Peek GV*, no. 531; *IK*(15), no. 1629; *SGO*(1), no. 03/02/60, where the passers-by are called to greet the dead who went into the House of the Pious as ἥρως.

[32] For σπονδή, libation, instead of general λοιβή or technical χοή, Traversa 1955; Traversa 1956, 288–322; Gallavotti 1956; Gallavotti 1957; *BE* 1958, no. 533; *SEG*(15), no. 853; Bernand 1969, no. 64; Venit 1999, 668, n. 135.

[33] Peek 1980, 20. See also Rizakis 1993.

[34] *IK*(10.2), no. 1248; *SGO*(2), 09/05/21.

[35] *Peek GV*, no. 2061; *IGUR*(3), no. 1226.

and make a sequence of fine offerings, honeycombs and incense; for even Minos and all the heroes after Minos were honoured with such gifts by their homeland. (transl. C.H. Hallett with revisions by A. Chaniotis, per. litt.)[36]

κείμεθ' ὁμοῦ τρεῖς παῖδες ὁμαίμονες ἥρωες ἁγνοὶ
Δάμων καὶ Φείδων καὶ 'Αμμώνιος ὄβριμα τέκνα.
[…] νῦν δὲ ναὸν καὶ ἄλσος ἀφηρωϊσμένον ἁγνὸν
τὰς παρὰ τῆς πατρίδος λαμβάνομεν χάριτας·
δόγμασι δημοσίοις γεγενήμε⟨θ⟩α ἥρ⟨ω⟩ες ἁγνοί.
εὐψυχῖτε γονεῖς ἀγαθοί, παύσασθε μερίμνας
[…] λαμπρὰ μετὰ λαμπρῶν
τὰς θυσίας ποίει κηρία καὶ λίβανον.
καὶ γὰρ τῷ Μίνωι καὶ τοῖς μετὰ Μίνοα πᾶσι
ἥρωσιν φέρεται ταῦτα ἀπὸ τῆς πατρίδος.

It praises the father's εὐεργεσία and records the city's decision to bestow honours upon his sons. Dedicated to them was a grove as well as a shrine, and by a special decree they were declared heroes. Despite the emphasised public character of the brothers' burial and cult, it was the parents who were supposed to submit them offerings in the form of incense and honey. And therefore it was they who must have seen in the fates Minos and other famous heroes the models for the fate of their children. Clearly here the public and private aspects of a hero-cult for the deceased overlapped. The theme of mourning and honouring the deceased by the entire πόλις community was also a part of the funerary poetry repertoire.[37] Therefore the Itanos epigram's reference to public honours bestowed upon the sons could to a certain extent be a poetic device. Some scholars (F. Graf, D. Hughes) believe that here some Pythagorean or Orphic influences came into play.[38] This theory's main premise is that the author of the epigram—according to the scholars—alludes to Pindar's concept of heroisation, and Pindar's views in such matters were closely associated with Orphism. The poet called distinguished heroes ἥρωες ἁγνοὶ, and similar concepts appear in Orphic texts.[39] On a gold tablet from Petelia in Italy (end of the 4th century BC)

[36] *Peek GV*, no. 1157; Hallett 2005, 59–60; Martinez-Fernández 2006, 44.

[37] Woodhead 1984. See also Lorenz 1976, 51–52; Steiner 1999, 392–393.

[38] Graf 1985, 130, n. 75; Hughes 1999, 171.

[39] The famous lines, Pindar, fr. 133 Maehler 1987–1989(2): 'But those from whom Persephone accepts the penalty for an ancient grief—she sends back their souls to the sun up above in the ninth year; from them grow noble kings and men swift in strength and outstanding in wisdom, and for the rest of time they are called holy heroes by mankind.' transl. M.M. Willcock (οἷσι δὲ Φερσεφόνα ποινὰν παλαιοῦ πένθεος δέξεται, ἐς τὸν ὕπερθεν ἅλιον κείνων ἐνάτῳ ἔτεϊ ἀνδιδοῖ ψυχὰς πάλιν, ἐκ τᾶν βασιλῆες ἀγαυοί καὶ σθένει κραιπνοὶ σοφίᾳ τε μέγιστοι

the deceased is portrayed as a ruler among heroes.[40] However, this theory is not entirely convincing. There are no grounds to assume the epigram's view of heroisation was exclusive to Orphism. Numerous other examples of this view are found in other epigrams and consolations. Besides, the association of Pindar (and his fragment 133) with Orphism is still debatable. Pindar's poetry inspired the writers of epigrams as much as other poets, and so such similarities cannot be treated as evidence of Orphic influences.[41] From our point of view more important is the fact that the Itanos epigram's author or purchaser associated the deceased's heroisation with the mythical fate of the chosen ones after death.[42] Anyway, what we have here is perhaps the most expressive testimony to poetic heroisation.

The Meaning of ἥρως

Can we therefore assume that the term ἥρως in epigrams occasionally referred to a deeper, traditional, sacred or cult meaning? If that is the case, the recently deceased who were called ἥρωες would have belonged to two opposite extremes; and, as in the case of apotheosis, we would be dealing here with a certain continuum. On the one hand, there were the deceased who had simple, modest tombs (on Thera, in Beotia, Lycia and Thessaly) with only the word ἥρως. The deceased in such cases were most likely not worshipped in extravagant, public ceremonies and had no special hero-cult.[43] On the other hand, there were the deceased like Aleximachos, who were most certainly publicly worshipped and as ἰσόθεοι were the recipients of a quasi-divine cult. Such cases involved full heroisation. The deceased became ἰσόθεοι and were worshipped in the same way as the great heroes of the past. Sacrificial offerings were submitted to them and requests were made for their help and protection.

Let us therefore try to look at the problem another way. Does the appearance of the term ἥρως and the various forms of heroisation in funerary

ἄνδρες αὔξοντ'· ἐς δὲ τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον ἥροες ἁγ'νοὶ πρὸς ἀνθρώπων καλ⟨έον⟩ται εὐδαιμόνων δραπέτας οὐκ ἔστιν ὄλβος πέφ'νε δὲ τρεῖς καὶ δέκ' ἄνδρας·). See also *Olympia* 2.61–80 Maehler 1987–1989(1).

40 *IG*(14), no. 638; Zuntz 1971, 358–359, B1; Pugliese Carratelli 2001, I A 2; Bernabé 2004–2007(2), no. 476 F ([...] καὶ τότ' ἔπειτ' ἄ[λλοισι μεθ'] ἡρώεσσιν ἀνάξει[ς]).

41 Day 1991, 557; Holzhausen 2004.

42 Perhaps this resulted from local funerary customs, for two other epigrams from Itanos also present the deceased as heroes, *Peek GV*, no. 678 and *Peek GV*, no. 1249.

43 Fraser 1977, 76–81. For testimonies from Thessaly, Pfohl 1983, 475; Avagianou 2002 and the comments in *EBGR* 2003, no. 7 and *SEG*(52), no. 546.

epigrams reflect a change in people's views of the afterlife? Is it the symptom of a broader, more complex phenomenon? Is there evidence that hero-cults for family members in Hellenistic and Greco-Roman times became a deep-rooted and widespread custom? Were families conducting traditional heroisations? Was it normal to set up a hero-cult and select an appropriate funerary relief or epitaph to immortalise the deceased's hero status? Was the bestowing of such honours the mark of an authentic cult, like the cult of a traditional hero, or was it rather a degradation of this concept to the level of merely confirming civic virtues and the devolution of hero-cult terminology to private tombs? Some scholars warn us against overrating the *heroa*, the Aleximachos and Epicteta foundations or epigrams using the word ἥρως as evidence of hero-cults for the dead. In his analysis of changes in the ἥρως concept during the Greco-Roman epoch, H.W. Pleket asks what was the difference between the hero-cults with foundations and the ἥρως term appearing on tombstones in reference to the deceased. If we only consider the meaning of the actual word ἥρως, there was no significant difference. Even if an epitaph only states the deceased's name (occasionally with the *patronymikon* and/or recording the deceased's age) and calls the deceased a ἥρως (e.g. in the set phrase ἥρως χρηστὲ χαῖρε) but makes no mention of laying offerings or any sort of cult for the deceased, we may still with a fair degree of certainty assume that on such a tomb offerings were regularly laid—though probably on a more modest scale. Quite simply, people of the lower classes could not afford to purchase a proper funerary epigram, let alone an inscription extensively describing the organization of a hero-cult. The assumption that offerings were laid at the tombs of people called ἥρως is supported by the fact that in Hellenistic and Greco-Roman times offerings were even laid at the tombs of people who were not called ἥρως; after death, such people were also honoured with banquets. Altars were even raised for them, all as part of a normal funerary cult.[44] This raises another question: did those who called their deceased ἥρωες have a system of beliefs different to those who did not do so? According to Pleket, the answer is simple: there were no differences between these two groups of people, because using hero terminology, like laying offerings, did not mean such people

[44] E.g. *Peek GV*, no. 849; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 176; *SGO*(3), no. 16/08/03. The boundary between the the cult of the dead, the heroic cult and the cult of gods was indeed thin, Rhomaios 1914, especially 212 and 234–235; Nilsson 1955–1961(2), 117; Kontoleon 1970, 47; Graf 1985, 130. In epitaphs occasionally ambiguous phraseology appears, e.g. θεοῖς ἡρωίσιν or θεοῖς καταχθονίοις.

really believed the deceased had supernatural characteristics. Even the formal, ceremonial 'heroisation' of benefactors by their πόλις did not mean that henceforth they would have the same status as mythological heroes. This was simply an elegant, prestigious way of expressing gratitude. The thus distinguished deceased were not regarded as beings of a higher order, they were not considered to have any special powers, and prayers were not addressed to them.[45] What is more, hero terminology was generally used, above all the word ἀφηρῴϊσεν, in reference to the deaths and funerals of ordinary people. Similar terminology was also used by Christians, who also adopted the word ἡρῷον to describe their own tombs. This means that such terms had by then lost any deeper meaning.[46] The 'watering down' of the word ἥρως was already evident in the 4th century BC, when it started being used as an honorary title for benefactors and other officials even in their lifetime. This practice became most widespread in Asia Minor during the time of the Empire. The word ἥρως even sometimes appears on coins; this was how a given city's most outstanding citizens or officials were honoured.[47] And so we come to the conclusion that is supported by most scholars: the widespread use of hero terminology on tombs resulted from a type of 'inflationary' process, where the word ἥρως was initially used exclusively in reference to gods, demigods and mythical heroes, but was later also posthumously applied to the most distinguished persons and next underwent a gradual 'democratisation' to eventually include all the deceased.[48] The process has been described as 'Demokratisierung', but also as the 'Dekadenz' of faith in heroes. References in literature seem to confirm that the word ἥρως appearing in epitaphs was a conventional way to speak of the dead, particularly in the time of the Empire.[49] It could be compared to today's conventional equivalents,

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[45] Pleket 1958, 28–31. For the ἡρωικαί τιμαὶ and ἰσόθεοι τιμαὶ for benefactors, Thériault 2003 and Strubbe 2004.

[46] Hughes 1999, 170. Christian examples: *SGO*(3), no. 14/06/14 and *Kaibel EG*, no. 279; *Peek GV*, no. 471.

[47] That's why Guarducci 1935 would include ἥρως into the honorific terminology. For ἥρως used with regard to the living, see e.g. *Kaibel EG*, no. 441; *Peek GV*, no. 655; *SGO*(4), no. 22/15/02. Contra Turcan 2003, 67; L. Robert himself considered those living heroes 'phantoms,' *BE* 1958, no. 109. See the recent discussion in Jones 2010, 93–96.

[48] Other interpretations were suggested, e.g. ἥρως driving away possible violators of the graves, Hicks, et al. 1874–1916(4.1), 34; Loch 1895, 283–284; Samellas 2002, 25, n. 37. The problem is that most of the curses against violators come from Asia Minor, without any correlation with the actual use of ἥρως in epitaphs.

[49] Alciphron, *Epistulae* 2.35.2; Heliodorus, *Aithiopika* 7.13.1. It seems that the transition of *Totenmahlrelief* context from the votive into the funerary one constitutes a parallel phenomenon, Himmelmann 1999, 83–93; *ThesCRA*(2), 143–145; in the same vein the term ἡρώων started to indicate regular gravesites, Lattimore 1942, 99–100, n. 89; Kubińska 1968, 26.

such as 'der selige,' or 'of blessed memory.' It was frequently stated simply out of politeness or to signify that all the proper funeral rituals had been conducted. Occasionally it meant nothing more than another way of saying 'the deceased.'[50] In the Imperial period the word ἥρως also sometimes had this particular meaning in epigrams.[51] We may therefore assume that on Thera, in Boeotia and Lycia, i.e. wherever the word ἥρως was most frequently used in tombstone inscriptions, it had totally ceased to have its original, religious meaning and was no longer associated with any specific rituals or hero-cult. In no way did it signify an actual 'heroisation' of the deceased or the bestowing of any form of divine honours. At best it was like a very refined complement or elegant suggestion that the achievements that brought the deceased glory and prestige in their lifetime would also stand them in good stead in the afterlife. But it was not associated with any particular belief in the afterlife, nor did it open up any prospects of salvation after death. A good example of how the word was used is an epigram on a funerary stele from Larissa in Thessaly from the 2nd–3rd century AD:

> I, Leonto, died a maiden, like a young flower
> when it bursts its bud and first shows its petals,
> —fifteen years old, just ready to be joined in wedlock,
> I have come to lie among the dead in a long sleep.
>
> Metropolis, to the memory of her daughter,
> Farwell, noble hero. (transl. M. Alexiou, supplemented)[52]
>
> [παρ]θένος οὖσα τέθ[νη]κα Λε[ο]ντὼ ὡς νέον ἄνθος
> ὥρης παντοθαλοῦς πρωτο[φ]ανὴ⟨ς⟩ καλύκων
> καὶ μέλλου[σα] γάμῳ δεκαπενταετὴς μείγνυσθαι
> ἐν φθιμένοις κεῖμαι ὕπνον ἔχουσα μακρόν.
>
> Μητρόπολις Λεοντῷ τῇ ἰδίᾳ θυγατρὶ μνείας χάριν·
> ἥρως χρηστ[ὴ] χαῖρε.

An epigram from Cyzicus describes the deceased Poseidonios as a ἥρως, while at the same time it includes a moving description of despair felt by

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50 In one of the magic papyri, in order for a curse to work, the purchaser had to head for a place where 'heroes' perished, i.e. gladiators or other victims of violent death, *PGM*(4), nos. 1394–1396.

51 *IK*(40), no. 1027; *SGO*(2), no. 09/14/03 (see the comments by Chaniotis in *EBGR* 1993–1994, no. 44, on p. 265); similarly *SGO*(2), no. 10/02/24 and *IK*(56), no. 88; *SGO*(4), no. 19/17/06 and *SGO*(1), no. 03/02/63.

52 *Peek GV*, no. 988. See Lattimore 1942, 97–101.

the bereaved family.[53] The mother, Moschion, had raised her son for Hades, i.e. all hope ended up in flames, in the grave. Previously so full of confidence and so proud of him, now she is heartbroken and feels 'small' (ὀλίγη) because she has no children. The mother feels relief when her son appears in her dreams, but in the mornings the tears return. It is striking that mention of heroisation did not alter the basic, standard structure of epigrams. They still used themes typical to all epigrams, including the emphasising of virtues that were typically given in praise of all the dead.[54] The bestowing of honours on the dead which were also attributed to heroes (ἡρωϊκαὶ τιμαί, ἰσόθεοι τιμαί) was usually accompanied by very general phrases regarding the deceased's new status in the afterlife. The purchasers were not interested in the concrete, specific, supernatural virtues of such 'heroes.' Instead, the objective was above all to duly emphasise the prestige of the deceased. Of course, proclaiming heroic (even divine) virtues served this purpose, but so did all the deceased's achievements and virtues associated with their mortal life.[55]

Immortal Gratitude, with Style

This might suggest the following explanation. It is very probable that ordinary people in Hellenistic times (no doubt laying traditional offerings on the graves of their forebears) decided to apply the ἥρως title (in previous times used by citizens to distinguish the most outstanding members of their community) to the recently deceased who in their eyes most deserved such an honour, i.e. their closest relatives. This attitude was not so much the result of some new religion or philosophy as an instinctive feeling that the life of the deceased was such a blessing for their closest family and friends that it was only proper to thank them the same way as one expressed gratitude to heroes or gods.[56] It was a way of saying that the deceased's achievements were so wonderful and important that they could be compared to the virtues and achievements of heroes and gods. Similarly, the inhabitants of Greco-Roman towns imagined that their most distinguished local patrons honoured with hero-cults or even divine cults were following in the footsteps

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53 *Peek GV*, no. 1923; *IK*(18), no 518; *SGO*(2), no. 08/01/51.

54 *Peek GV*, no. 768; *SGO*(1), no. 05/02 / 02.

55 Fabricius 1999, 74.

56 Pleket 1958, 28–31; Wrede 1981, 9; Waelkens 1983, 278–283; Henrichs 1984, especially 144–145; Schmidt 1991, 143.

of the great heroes and benefactors of humanity such as Heracles or Asclepius, who had indeed acquired divine status. The achievements of these mortals brought to mind those deeds benefitting whole civilisations done by some of the goddesses and gods, such as Demeter or Dionysus. After all, one of the fundamental aspects of the cults of deities was the expression of gratitude for their divine εὐεργεσία.[57] A hero-cult in gratitude for the εὐεργεσία of a deceased relative is mentioned in an epigram for Aphrodisios from Oine in Ikaria in the 2nd century BC. It states that family members, offering the deceased τιμὴν ἀθανάτοις ἴσην, raised an altar for him, laid sacrifices and burned incense in return for the honours and good deeds he had carried out during his lifetime.[58]

No doubt the above described attitudes were held by a large proportion of epigram purchasers and recipients while alive. Nevertheless, in some cases heroisation must have been more of a literary or rhetorical concept.[59] It suggested the prestige of being associated with mythical and historical heroes. It also nurtured traditions, provided historic role models and an epic way of commemorating the deceased. Whichever new way the ἥρως concept may have been applied in reference to the deceased, it was still already deeply rooted in the traditions of funerary poetry. A fundamental purpose of Archaic funerary epigrams was to apply the 'heroic' aspect and ethos not only to selected heroes but also to deceased aristocrats, who were thus immortalised in human memory. Epigrams turned mortals into epic heroes, in accordance with Plato's instruction that the lives of mortals on earth should be praised like those of heroes. Memories of them should be nurtured; their virtues and achievements should be set as examples for future generations to follow.[60] The epigram was an 'epos' in honour of the dead. Epigrams differed from an epic poem in that they immortalised ordinary (albeit aristocratic) mortals, and in that it was the task of the epigram's purchaser or author to find what was most valuable and important in the deceased's life.[61] Thus the style of the Homeric epic was transferred to tombstones, while the Archaic deceased was often presented as

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57 For εὐεργεσία as a motive for heroisation, Hughes 1999, 173; for apotheosis (ἰσόθεοι τιμαί), Chaniotis 2007, 157–158.

58 Matthaiou, Papadopoulos 2003; see the subsequent discussion through *BE* 2004, no. 520; *EBGR* 2004, no. 189; *BE* 2006, no. 39; *SEG*(53.2), no. 895.

59 E.g. the dead Heras as a powerful ἥρως in *Peek GV*, no. 1843; Bernand 1969, no. 68.

60 Plato, *Leges* 7.801e–802a. See the accumulation of Homeric expressions in *Kaibel EG*, no. 243a; *Peek GV*, no. 2040; *SGO*(1), no. 06/02/32; Samama 2003, no. 187.

61 Nicosia 1992, 24; Hughes 1999, 173; Le Bris 2001, 173.

someone quite detached from their family and epoch, an eternal hero, but one who at the same time evoked sympathy and grief. The paradox here is that in Archaic times praising the recently departed in Homeric language and identifying them with epic heroes was possible without using the actual word ἥρως.[62] Archaic epigrams did not refer to the deceased as heroes.[63] So why was it that later this terminology started being used? Perhaps a possible factor behind this renaissance of the ἥρως concept in the funerary context was 'archaism,' so characteristic of the Second Sophistic (circa 50–250 AD), expressed among other ways by a greater appreciation of ancient Greek myths. Titles such as the 'new Penelope,' 'new Homer' or 'new Themistocles,' at the time applied to the living as well as the dead, were conscious references to Classical myths. In the onomastics of this period one notices a fashion for giving children Homeric names—Herodes Atticus called his adopted sons Achilles, Pollux and Memnon.[64] The increased interest in traditional hero-cults was reflected in a more widespread appearance of hero-cult terminology on tombstones.[65] An analogous phenomenon included attributing various 'heroic' genealogies to the deceased[66] and evoking diverse forms of salvation in the afterlife with metaphors alluding to classical Greek mysteries.[67]

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62 Steiner 1999, 391; Le Bris 2001, 173–176.

63 Pointner 1974, 31. In the Attic funerary inscriptions of the Archaic and Classical eras fallen warriors were called noble men, never heroes, Stupperich 1977, 62; Calkins 2010, 173.

64 Bowie 1974; Swain 1996, 65–100; Gordon 1996, 8–15; Jones 2010, 66–74. The studies of the Second Sophistic do not take funerary epigrams into the consideration; only some connections between epigrammatic poetry of the time and the Sophistic movement were accentuated, see Bowie 1990, 53–66 and references *SEG*(39), no. 1823. For the influence of the Second Sophistic on sarcophagi, Ewald 2004; for the 'romantic attitude to the past' in the context of a funerary cult, Houby-Nielsen 1998.

65 Nock 1957, 120–121, quoting the studies by Eitrem 1929 and Solmsen 1941, especially 156–159, of the image of heroes in Philostratus; see the essays collected by Aitken, Berenson Maclean 2004.

66 Masson 1974; Chaniotis 1987, especially 42, n. 5; Thomas 1989, 159, n. 9; Schmitz, et al. 1988, where the deceased family members are titled ἥρωες; Nicosia 1996. For ancient Greek genealogies, Thomas 1989, 155–195; Möller 1996; D'Onofrio 1998.

67 For the cultic, votive manifestations of archaism, Schörner 2003, 199–209; Martin 1995, 115, n. 91 regarding Alexander of Abonoteichos, who—according to some traditions—has founded mysteries imitating Eleusinian mysteries (Lucian, *Alexander* 38), and for the dependence of the Hellenistic version of the myth of Isis and Osiris presented by Plutarch on the myth of Demeter contained in the second of the *Homeric Hymns*.

Heroes, Daemons, and the Dead

Most scholars would be inclined to support such minimalist interpretations of the Greco-Roman phenomenon of heroising the deceased. In their view heroic terminology was used although it was no longer associated with rituals. Yet one may still raise certain reservations to this view. Above all we should avoid underestimating heroisations, even the sort mentioned above, for we run the risk of applying modern concepts to those of antiquity. Today we may get the impression that this was simply a degeneration of the term ἥρως, depriving it of any deeper meaning, because according to the minimalist approach such heroisations were not 'authentic' heroisations. And yet to the ancient Greeks the matter could look quite different. Their view was quite different even if we ignore the possible influences of ancient sects and mysteries, whose beliefs indeed included the apotheosis and heroisation of the dead, as well as the idea of the divine element in humans and the promise of a happy afterlife among the gods.[68] For we should not forget that the complex origins of regarding the deceased as heroes were associated with various traditional cults, including: hero-cults, cults of the ancestors and cults of the dead.[69] In a way, the deceased joined beings of a higher order. With time they even appeared to possess supernatural powers, as daemons (δαίμονες), who were hierarchically situated somewhere between gods and people.[70] This was a widespread concept in the Greco-Roman period.[71] In this sense heroisation may be viewed as the positive equivalent of the demonisation of the dead, as encountered in the magic *defixiones* (found in graves where they were occasionally inserted in between the deceased's hands or lips). The use of *defixiones* strongly confirms a deep-rooted belief in the ghosts of the dead, which could be summoned to perform magic. The idea of δαίμονες first appeared on curse tablets in the 4th century BC,[72] and they constitute significant evidence regardless of whether or not the magical powers were believed to come from the actual deceased or rather

68 Apotheosis and heroisation in mysteries Nilsson 1955–1961(2), 690; Dodds 1965, 74–101; Waelkens 1983. Dionysiac: Cole 1984, 46; Orphic: Nock 1926b, LIV, n. 71; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 195; Pugliese Carratelli 2001, 65; Bernabé, Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, 20 and 178.

69 Rohde 1925, 527–533; Nock 1957, 120–121.

70 See the dead Mokazis as a powerful 'daemon' controlling his native neighbourhood, *SGO*(2), no. 09/06/18.

71 Nock 1957, 120–121.

72 See e.g. *SGO*(4), no. 17/10/05, with—probably—a striking allusion to the stealing of bodyparts of the deceased for the use in magic.

from chthonic deities, especially Hades, Persephone and Hecate. Prior to the 4th century BC, the word δαίμων generally meant supernatural power, be it of gods or of heroes. A similar tendency to attribute to the dead particular qualities and powers is also noticeable in the way attitudes towards heroes changed. Namely, in Hellenistic and Roman times relatives called their dead heroes even if they had not been heroised by a city and had no public cult. However, these two concepts, of daemons and heroes, cannot be treated as equivalents, because the term δαίμονες had a more general meaning.[73]

Even if the deceased were only sporadically, in certain cases officially called daemons, heroes or 'saints' (ἱεροί), it would seem it was quite easy for them to acquire such a status. Good evidence of this is found in the funerary epigrams themselves. There we occasionally find a division of the deceased into two categories, good and bad daemons who could intervene in the lives of mortals on earth.[74] Some epigrams take the form of a dialogue, where the deceased speaks in verse and the passer-by in prose. This was to give the impression that the deceased had a supernatural, heroic status; for indeed gods spoke through oracles in a similar fashion.[75] The same attitude may be noticed in the customs and rituals mentioned in some epigrams, ones which state that the hero should be greeted with appropriate respect.[76] The custom of kissing one's own hand while passing a grave would seem originally to have been a gesture honouring heroes.[77] Greeting the dead in such a way was considered to be a sign of piety. As mentioned earlier, some tombs were built like altars, or alternatively altars were built on top of tombs and epitaphs would include dedications.[78] Therefore there must have been a considerable temptation to give such cults of the dead a form of hero worship in the religious sense. For relatives, such a deceased person became a supernatural being. The deceased's grave became something like

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73 Garland 1985, 6–7; Bravo 1987.

74 See the references in Chaniotis 2000, 179, n. 30. For the dead in general, Kurtz, Boardman 1971, 267–302; Johnston 1999, 36–81. The appeal for the customary sacrifices to be offered to the dead in an Attic epigram includes the term θέλγειν, indicating the propitiatory act; it seems the dead was regarded a ἥρως, *Kaibel EG*, no. 120.

75 Casey 2004; comments in *EBGR* 2005, no. 29.

76 E.g. *Kaibel EG*, no. 296; *Peek GV*, no. 531; *IK*(15), no. 1629; *SGO*(1), no. 03/02/60.

77 See Rohde 1925, 527, 555, n. 23 and e.g. *SGO*(2), no. 08/01/49; *Peek GV*, no. 1854; *IK*(18), no. 278; *SGO*(2), no. 08/04/06.

78 Especially in Asia Minor; see a notable testimony in *SEG*(6), no. 72; Strubbe 1992, no. 3. For the votive aspects of some funerary inscriptions, *MAMA*(5), XXXIV–XXXVIII and *EBGR* 1999, no. 181, on p. 93; Robert 1940–1965(13), 26–28; Waelkens 1983, 280–286; Aliquot 2002, 238–239.

a temple, on top of which or in front of which sacrifices were laid (not unlike the sacrifices offered to heroes, though sacrifices offered to heroes differed from those offered to gods).[79] Thus, it is possible that heroic terminology was used because it was associated with private, family rituals. And more importantly, it was used in order to secure the protective powers of the dead for the living.[80]

Epigrams and Consolations

As it seems, support and help from the thus heroised deceased was only occasionally expected.[81] It basically only occurred when the deceased was attributed with special powers or specifically recognised as a kind of guardian deity.[82] Near Oenoanda there are two (or possibly three) funerary cult inscriptions from the mid-2nd century AD dedicated to a local landowner who was recognised as a hero, most likely by his servants or employees. These inscriptions include what could be construed as very personal sentiments as well as use of the ἥρως term in its quite literal, cult sense.[83] Also in the mid-2nd century AD in a village called 'Theseus Thermae' in Lydia a college of slaves at the estate of the proconsul for Asia, C. Iulius Quadratus, honoured his deceased eight-year-old son as a hero, with an invocation for his guardianship—presumably, over his father and mother.[84] From the 1st century AD there is a very extensive inscription of the testament of Epicrates of Lydia, which ensured funds for the maintenance of the tomb (μνημεῖον) of his prematurely deceased son, Diophantos. The text seems to refer to a normal funerary cult foundation. It requests only the scattering of roses on the grave, whilst not mentioning any sacrifices. Suitable curses were supposed to protect the tomb from being defiled. Yet Diophantos is nevertheless a ἥρως, and the foundation itself was not only inspired by paternal love (φιλότεκνον), but also by the son appearing in his father's

79 Naour 1977, 290; Stupperich 1977, 59.

80 A. Chaniotis, per. litt.

81 See e.g. Maximus of Tyre, *Orationes* 9.6.

82 See ἥρως ἐπιφανὴς in *TAM*(5.2), 1105; αἰῶνος ἥρως to be published in *IGLS*(14), no. 625, see Sartre-Fauriat 2001(2), 220; ἡρώων ἀνάθεμα in Peek 1978b; *SEG*(28), no. 541. Some other notable instances: θεᾷ ⟨ἥ⟩(ρωι) in *IGUR*(2.1), no. 697; θεῶι ἥρωι in *IGUR*(2.2), no. 848. Such heroes could give oracles, see the case of the priestess Ammias, Robert 1937, 129–133; *BE* 1938, no. 381; Waelkens 1983, 265; *TAM*(5.2), no. 1055; the deceased parents giving oracles in *SGO*(3), no. 16/41/08. See also *EBGR* 2001, o. 121, on p. 230.

83 *IGRR*(3), no. 1506; *TAM*(2.2), no. 713; Milner 2004, no. 1.

84 *IGRR*(4), no. 1377; Robert 1960, 282 = *Opera* (2), 798; *TAM*(5.1), 71.

dreams at night and by the supernatural qualities of these apparitions (καὶ ὀνείροις καὶ σημείοις καὶ φαντάσμασιν αὐτοῦ μοι τοῦ ἥρωος).[85] In 3rd century AD Athens a father honoured his five-year-old son, Theophilos, as a family hero (ἥρωα συνγενείας).[86] Although epigrams only in exceptional cases appealed for the deceased to actively intervene in aid of the living, theoretically anyone worshipped as a hero could perform the role of a guardian daemon.[87] If such a deceased person had—as was sometimes assumed—a good or evil influence on the living, some of the prayers offered up to them must have had a propitiatory character. An epigram from Capri (1st–2nd century AD) includes a plea to the powers of the underworld: yet asking for acceptance in the underworld the deceased Hypatos appeals not to Hades but to δα[ί]μονες ⟨ἐσ⟩θλοί.[88] On a tomb from Rhodes (4th century BC) Damocles (having duly buried his late wife) asks for the δαίμων ἐσθλὸς to favour him in life.[89] An epigram from the island of Nisyros (2nd century BC) states that the deceased was to care for her relatives; the words here are phrased in a way reminiscent of a prayer offered to gods.[90] On a tomb from Pergamon (1st–2nd century AD) a deceased relative, who was a physician, after death, became a protector close to the gods:

> Be merciful and, as before, administer for me medicines when I am ill;
> for now your life's destiny is closer to the gods[91]
>
> ἵλαθι καί μοι ὄπαζε νόσων ἄκος ὡς τὸ πάροιθεν·
> νῦν γὰρ θειοτέρην μοῖραν ἔχεις βιότο[υ].

A funerary inscription on a stele from Rome (3rd century AD) includes the following interesting statement:

> Sacred to the ghosts of Lower World.[92] Unhappy parents, Lucius Minicius Anthimos and Scribonia Felicissima, to their dearest child and to their own

[85] Herrmann, Polatkan 1969; Guarducci 1967–1978(3), 257–258; Graf 1985, 131; Hughes 1999, 168, n. 8.

[86] *IG*(2.2), no. 6797; see the references in Walters 1988, 49, n. 137.

[87] For ἥρως ἀγαθός, *EBGR* 2002, no. 28, on p. 441; ἥρως ἀγαθοποιός, Pfuhl, Möbius 1977–1979(1), no. 306 (pl. 54); *EBGR* 2000, no. 108, on p. 282; *IK*(58.1), no. 31.

[88] *Kaibel EG*, no. 624; *Peek GV*, no. 1576; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 182; *SEG*(30), no. 1147; Wilhelm 1980, no. 86.

[89] *Peek GV*, no. 893. For the dead appearing as δαίμονες ἀγαθοί, Guarducci 1967–1978(3), 154, n. 3; Fraser 1977, 73; for θεοὶ δαίμονες Welles 1941, 84–88; Nowak 1960, 43–46.

[90] *Peek GV*, no. 805; Peek 1967, no. 1.

[91] *Kaibel EG*, no. 243a; *Peek GV*, no. 2040; *SGO*(1), no. 06/02/32; Samama 2003, no. 187.

[92] Literally 'to the gods-heroes,' the counterpart of the Latin formula *diis manibus*, Waelkens 1983, 267, n. 75; for θεοῖς καταχθονίοις, Mosino 2000.

god who listens to their prayers,[93] L.[ucius] Anthimianos, who lived four years, five months and 20 days.

(translation with revisions suggested by A. Chaniotis, per. litt.)[94]

θεοῖς Ἥρωσιν. Λούκιος Μινίκιος Ἄνθιμος καὶ Σκρειβωνία Φηλεικίσσιμα ἀτυχεῖς γονεῖς Λ(ουκίῳ) Μινικίῳ Ἀνθιμιανῷ τέκνῳ γλυκυτάτῳ καὶ θεῷ ἰδίῳ ἐπηκόῳ ζήσαν(τι) ἔτη δʹ, μῆνας εʹ, ἡ(μέρας) κʹ.

The actual epigram makes no mention of the deceased's fate after death; his divine status is simply referred to as a matter of course in the introduction to the epitaph. Yet since the deceased's status is mentioned quite outside the poetic part of the epitaph, one cannot dismiss it as a mere ploy or theme used for artistic effect.[95]

Presumably some of the offerings in a regular funerary cult could have been expressions of faith in the deceased's life after death and thus could also be considered authentic forms of heroisation. Nevertheless, this form or heroisation differed from others in that the family did not expect supernatural manifestations; the family did not seek the deceased's protection or help as he/she was considered too weak. Instead greater emphasis seems to have been placed on the deceased's happiness in the afterlife as a being of a higher order. This is indicated by the fact that from the 2nd century BC on funerary epigrams started expressing a close connection between visions of happiness enjoyed by the deceased and consolations addressed to their families.[96] It is possible that such visions originated from literary or rhetoric traditions which next became part of the consolation repertoire, and it was from the latter source that they started appearing in funerary epigrams. Or rather, as A. Chaniotis puts it, there is no need to assume that there is direct influence from *consolationes* on tomb inscriptions. These are two parallel expressions of the same phenomenon that ultimately originates in ancient rhetorical theories.[97]

One way or another, heroisation was an important element in consolations of the ancient era. Menander Rhetor of Laodicea on the Lycus (3rd century BC) wrote a treatise on the subject of rhetoric, including a chapter on

93 Literally 'listening to,' θεός ἐπήκοος, see Weinreich 1912, 21, no. 104 and pp. 37–38; Welles 1941, 90–91; Nock 1957, 121; *BE* 1964, no. 596; Vérilhac 1978(2), 321; Le Bris 2001, 111; Chaniotis 2011, 274, n. 39.

94 *Kaibel EG*, no. 314; *Peek GV*, no. 1166; *IGUR*(4), no. 1702; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 106; references Samama 2003, 579.

95 Waelkens 1983, 263–264.

96 Vérilhac 1978(2), 313–314, 321; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 175–180.

97 A. Chaniotis, per. litt.

funerary speeches where he states that the deceased should be praised as a hero, or worshipped as a god, whose likenesses is portrayed, and who should be prayed to as a supernatural being. Aelius Aristides (2nd century AD), in speech 31 delivered in honour of his deceased student, Eteoneus of Cyzicus, who probably died at a young age, states that he took a place amongst the gods and became a timeless hero. Such a heroisation is also referred to by the rhetorician Himerius (4th century AD) when he states that his deceased son, Rufinus, is now living among the gods.[98] These *consolationes* suggest that the heroised deceased had the honour to reside and be happy among gods, and even share some of their virtues and powers. For us this is an important fact as heroisation could not appear as a consolatory topos if it were not a fairly common idea. One may even assume that whatever influence there was came not necessarily from the *consolationes* to tomb inscriptions but also the other way round, from epigrams to the consolations.[99] The authors of consolations could not afford to ignore the feelings of their audience, which comprised not only intellectuals like themselves, but also ordinary people. Conversely, we may assume that such emotions were much sought after and exploited.[100] For instance, the funeral speech of Aelius Aristides in honour of his student Eteoneus could have served as a comfort to the family and other mourners only if it appealed to their genuine imaginations and views of the afterlife. For, indeed, this orator states that the deceased was not abducted by Cocytus or Acheron, nor did he lie concealed beneath a tombstone, but rather he had become a hero. Similarly Menander Rhetor in his chapter on funeral speeches instructs the reader to praise the deceased as a hero.[101] Whichever way we look at it, there must be a reason why a large number of *consolationes* present the deceased as guardian deities and why some examples of this can also be found in epigrams.

The Diverging Semantic Dimensions

What is more, criticism of the minimalist interpretation of hero worship is not only limited to negative arguments, i.e. ones highlighting the weaknesses of such an interpretation. For in all probability the period under consideration, the Greco-Roman period, was one where use of the term ἥρως

[98] Himerius, *Declamationes* 23.23.
[99] Lattimore 1942, 216.
[100] Parker 1996, 136; Jones 2001, 146–147.
[101] Aelius Aristides, *Orationes* 31.15; Menander Rhetor 414.16–26 Russel, Wilson 1981.

was still considered an exceptional privilege.[102] And this was not only in the case of decrees or epigrams referring to the laying of offerings for the deceased as heroes, or the—in themselves very telling—exceptional cases mentioning hero-cults.

Whereas epitaphs give us an idea about the beginnings and geographical range of heroic terminology, and while foundations are a source of information on the legal, social and cultural aspects of heroising the dead, epigrams provide complementary information regarding the more 'internal' aspects, allowing us to better understand the 'thought' behind it. They help us to describe the 'hierarchy' of the dead, all the way up to the status of demigods and gods, as well as all the relevant imagery and vocabulary. They are the best source of information regarding the evolution of the term ἥρως in the Greco-Roman epoch. Epigrams which referred to the deceased as 'equal to [ἴσος] heroes' express a baffling reticence in attributing full heroic status.[103] Thus described is a deceased woman in an epigram from Melos from the 3rd century BC:

> Even after death, I love my husband, for thinking of nothing
> else, did he build me a tomb, so that people can admire it.
> And, honouring his wife, he made me equal to
> heroes, in gratitude for the joys of [our] love.[104]
>
> στέργω καὶ φθιμένα τὸν ἐμὸν πόσιν· οὐ γὰρ ὀθνείαις
> φροντίσι{ν} θαητὸν τύμβον ἔτευξε βροτοῖς,
> καὶ τιμαῖς ἰσόμοιρον ἔθηκε⟨ν⟩ τὰν ὁμόλεκτρον
> ἥρωσι⟨ν⟩, φίλτρων ε⟨ἵ⟩νεκα τερπνοτάτων.

In an epigram from Smyrna (1st century BC–1st century AD) the deceased Dionysius was made equal to the heroes (ἴσος ἥρωσιν), and thus he, like a hero, was due τέμενος:

> He left his share of mortal life; he is equal to
> immortal heroes, [for] like them, he has a temple.[105]
>
> θνητῶν γὰρ προλιπὼν ζωῆς μέρος ἀθανάτοισι
> ἔσθ' ἴσος ἥρωσιν τὰτὸν ἔχων τέμενος.

In an epigram from Ephesus (3rd century BC?) a deceased six-year-old girl is abducted by Kore to Hades; the gods, however, took pity on the child and

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[102] See e.g. *Kaibel EG*, no. 433; *Peek GV*, no. 1484; *SGO*(4), no. 22/36/03 and *Kaibel EG*, no. 296; *Peek GV*, no. 531; *IK*(15), no. 1629; *SGO*(1), no. 03/02/60 and *CIG*(3), no. 4058.

[103] Schmidt 1991, 145.

[104] *Kaibel EG*, no. 189; *Peek GV*, no. 1128; other references Pircher 1979, no. 19.

[105] *Peek GV*, no. 768; *SGO*(1), no. 05/02 / 02. See also *Peek GV*, no. 1107.

did not allow her to descend to the underworld. After death, the girl's spirit rose through the air for her to be among the gods as a heroine:

> This tomb encloses a beautiful body which—alas!—[suffered] a violent fate.
>
> For Kore, wife of Ploutos, led you to Hades when you were six years old or a little more.
> But the blessed gods taking pity did not abandon your soul to sink into Hades' dwelling, and in the air it is in flight in the sky; and among the gods
> Stratonike has a portion equal to the heroines. But if anyone ever saw the one whom the tomb [now] encloses when she was alive, he would not pass by this place without tears. (transl. G.H.R. Horsley)[106]
>
> τύμβος ὧδε κατέχει καλὸν δέμας αἲ βιόμοι⟨ρ⟩ον
>
> ἡλικίην γὰρ ἔχουσαν ἐτ[ῶ]ν ἓξ ἢ εἴ τι πλῖόν σε
> Κούρη [Π]λο[υ]τῆος ἤγαγεν εἰς ᾿Αΐδην·
> ἀ[λλ]ὰ θεοὶ μάκα[ρε]ς οἰκτείραντες
> ψυχὴν οὐ πρόλιπαν δῦνα[ι] δόμον Ἄϊδος ἴσω·
> ἠέρι δὲ π̣[επό]τηται κατ᾿ οὐρανόν· ἐν δ̣ὲ [θεοῖ]σιν
> εἴσην μοῖραν ἔχει ἥρω[ι] Στρατονείκη.
> εἰ δέ τις ἣ[ν κ]ατέχει τύμβος ζῶσάν ποτ᾿ ἐσ̣ε̣ῖ̣δ̣ε̣ν̣,
> οὐκ ἂν ἀδακρυτεὶ τόν[δε] διῆλθε τόπον.

As can be seen, here we are dealing with a kind of paradox. The term ἥρως was increasingly watered down as a conventional, somewhat clichéd expression. And yet in a certain number of epigrams it retained its original, cultic or sacred meaning.[107] Interestingly, similar evolutions and dualities may be observed in other traditional terms concerning the deceased. The word μάκαρ at first primarily concerned gods and heroes; in the 5th century BC the term μακάριος was still used as a definition of the word ἥρως.[108] Later, however, ordinary mortals were described as μάκαρες in epitaphs. Similarly, in literature this word started being used in reference to recently deceased persons.[109] It is possible that authors using this term in funerary epigrams

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106 *IK*(16), no. 2104; *SGO*(1), no. 03/02/67.

107 Deneken 1886–1890, 2516–2554; Lattimore 1942, 98. Peres 2003, 95 (not convincing in his claim that wreaths presented on funerary reliefs are a distinct sign of heroisation). See also the epigrams accompanying the aforementioned foundations of the heroic cult, especially *Kaibel EG*, no. 222; *Peek GV*, no. 48; Sève 1996. Commenting on the foundation of Critolaos Peek assumed a traditional, cultic meaning of ἥρως applied here, Peek 1960, 297. Sève 1996, 684, n. 4 is sceptical, as in his opinion the text is nothing but a summary of a consolatory decree.

108 References in Himmelmann 1990, 68. The term μάκαρ was used for gods, μακάριος for humans, Lougovaya 2008, 36, n. 19.

109 Farnell 1921, 390; Garland 1985, 10.

occasionally had in mind its cult and religious meaning and thus expressed the conviction that those deceased who were destined for the heavens or the Blessed Isles belonged to the community of heroes or gods.[110] One may also observe regional differences with regard to the use of this word: μακαρίτης in reference to the dead for some reason was particularly popular in Attica.[111]

Perhaps the expression χαῖρε, meaning something like our 'rest in peace,' underwent a similar evolution. It is probable that this was how during funeral ceremonies farewell was said by the living to the deceased to express their gratitude and attachment, when the body was actually laid to rest. Then, sporadically from the 4th century onwards, the expression started appearing in funerary epigrams (χαῖρε καὶ σύ, or abbreviated to καὶ σύ) either as an address to the deceased or as the deceased addressing passers-by.[112] It is interesting, however, that this particular expression in turn did not become popular in Attica. (This just like the term ἥρως on tombs!) In exceptional cases when the word did appear on tombs, they were the tombs of resident foreigners, not native citizens. Indeed, it was relatively rare in the rest of the Greek world, though it was evident in Boeotia and Phocis.[113] According to E. Rohde, use of the word χαῖρε suggested a cult for the deceased, and was addressed to those with divine attributes, as that was how heroes were also addressed.[114] Of a similar opinion is C. Sourvinou-Inwood, according to whom its increased use on the tombstones of particular people coincided with their heroisation, i.e. the two phenomena were directly linked.[115] Like the term ἥρως, so too χαῖρε had a double meaning: one very

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110 Lattimore 1942, 52; Hani 1972, 192 ad 13. In *IK*(22.1), no. 835; *SGO*(1), no. 02 / 06/08, Pluto leads the dead to Elysium, to μάκαρες. See also the comments by R. Merkelbach on *SGO*(5), 43 ad 24/29, where religious context of the term μάκαρες is probable ([ἄνγελοι οὐρα]νίων μάκαρες). The heroised dead as μάκαρ is honoured with a banquet in *SGO*(1), no. 06/02 / 29. See generally de Heer 1969. Kraus 2003 stresses the parallel phenomenon, a 'democratisation' of the notion of Elysium, initially destined only for the privileged heroes, then also for the regular εὐσεβεῖς.

111 Rohde 1925, 556, n. 31.

112 Rönne, Fraser 1957, 158–160. For the Hellenistic usage of χαῖρε, Schneider 1969, 218, n. 1.

113 For the repeated χαῖρε on the monuments in western parts of Greece, Fraser, Maas 1955, 117; Rönne, Fraser 1957, 161. The gods' names repeat also in the cultic invocations; perhaps the dead addressed in this way on funerary monuments were regarded heroes. More probable is, however, the influence of ritual lamentation. For χαῖρε in the Orphic tablets, Pugliese Carratelli 2001, 126.

114 Rohde 1925, 555, notes 21–23; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 180–216; Wachter 1998; Gavrilaki, Tzifopoulos 1998, 350–351; Le Bris 2001, 155–161; Tsagalis 2008, 83–84.

115 Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 175–180, 206 and n. 389 with references. See also Bremmer 2006, especially 25 (with further references on χαῖρε).

conventional, virtually ‘secular,’ and the other religious and sacred.[116] It is this latter meaning that symbolised the pious intentions of the user and the heroisation of the deceased.[117] On the basis of epigrams from the Archaic and Classical periods, Sourvinou-Inwood has accentuated the formal meaning of hero-cults to better understand the context in which the ‘pious’ use of the word χαῖρε was first applied on tombstones. In her opinion, it is not by accident that one of the earliest examples of this form of paying respects (χαίρετε) to the dead appeared on a *polyandrion*.[118] Here the term χαῖρε preserved much of its original sense, as in ‘fare well’ and ‘be joyful’. At the time it had not yet become a form of politeness, as it would later. Χαῖρε in the ‘pious’ sense started appearing on private tombstones towards the end of the 4th century BC. But it was not before the 3rd century BC that the idealisation and heroisation of the deceased started to take root in Greek culture, and only later (from the 4th century BC onwards) did funerary epitaphs start expressing an outlook on the afterlife where the souls of the deceased ascended to heaven and acquired a quasi-divine status.[119]

The Deceased Privileged As Heroes

We are therefore confronted by a fundamental question: if in some cases the traditional, cult status sense was applied to the term ἥρως, in what circumstances did it happen? The fact that defining the deceased as heroes became popular only in particular regions of the Greco-Roman world suggests that it concerned not so much convention as a certain ideology, a system of values and imaginations accepted or rejected by individuals or communities. After all, in their afterlife such heroes enjoyed a type of privileged status; their epitaphs contrasted sharply with the pessimism of the vast majority of other epitaphs.[120] As mentioned earlier, already towards the end of the Classical period the deceased were thus heroised in Boeotia. At the

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116 In one of the epigrams a deceased woman claims that χαῖρε she was greeted with by a passer-by might well be real χαῖρε, if only she was still alive, *IK*(39), no. 54 and ibidem(40), p. 3; *SGO*(2), no. 09/04/06. For other examples of ‘secular’ use made of religious, cultic terminology in funerary inscriptions (ἀνατίθημι, ἱερός, ἄγαλμα, εὐσέβεια), *EBGR* 1999, no. 181, on p. 93.

117 In *Peek GV*, no. 1855; *IK*(18), no. 278; *SGO*(2), no. 08/01/44 a passer-by driven by his piety (εἵνεκεν εὐσεβίης) greeted the dead with his χαίρειν, and in return he was greeted by the dead himself.

118 *AP* 7.254; *Peek GV*, no. 14; *CEG*(1), no. 4.

119 Lattimore 1942, 28–43, 55–59; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 202. Contra Kaufman 1897, 19.

120 Hughes 1999, 171.

other extreme were the Hellenistic tombs on the island of Rhodes. Although they frequently took the form of altars, the epitaphs never described the deceased as heroes.[121] It is striking that for a long time heroisation did not occur in Attica and Athens.[122] The first possible examples appeared sometime between the 2nd and 1st century BC, while the greatest number date from the Roman period.[123] The problem is that absence of the term ἥρως does not necessarily mean that heroisation of deceased citizens did not occur. That is why the question of heroisation ('heroic' nudity) in Athens of the late 5th and 4th century BC has become the subject of academic debate. Some scholars remain sceptical, among other reasons because none of the epigrams from the Classical period make any reference to heroisation. Aristotle's words (4th century BC) on the exceptional, almost supernatural status of the deceased did not necessarily have to concern heroisation per se.[124] And besides, inscribing the term ἥρως on tombstones never became popular in this region.[125] It was something that was really only practiced by foreigners or members of the lower classes.[126] This seems to be confirmed

[121] Fraser 1977, 76–81; Gabelmann 1994.

[122] With some exceptions, see e.g. Thönges-Stringaris 1965, nos. 91 and 174.

[123] Deneken 1886–1890, 2552–2553; Pfohl 1953, 65–68; Pfohl 1964a, 119; Tsagalis 2008 passim.

[124] Aristotle, *Eudemos* fr. 44; Pseudo-Plutarch, *Consolatio ad Apollonium* = *Moralia* 2.115b–c: 'Wherefore, O best and blessedest of all, in addition to believing that those who have ended this life are blessed and happy, we also think that to say anything false or slanderous against them is impious, from our feeling that it is directed against those who have already become our betters and superiors. And this is such an old and ancient belief with us that no one knows at all either the beginning of the time or the name of the person who first promulgated it, but it continues to be a fixed belief for all time' transl. F.C. Babbitt (διόπερ, ὦ κράτιστε πάντων καὶ μακαριστότατε, πρὸς τῷ μακαρίους καὶ εὐδαίμονας εἶναι τοὺς τετελευτηκότας νομίζειν καὶ τὸ ψεύσασθαί τι κατ' αὐτῶν καὶ τὸ βλασφημεῖν οὐχ ὅσιον ὡς κατὰ βελτιόνων ἡγούμεθα καὶ κρειττόνων ἤδη γεγονότων. καὶ ταυθ' οὕτως ἀρχαῖα καὶ παλαιὰ παρ' ἡμῖν, ὥστε τὸ παράπαν οὐδεὶς οἶδεν οὔτε τοῦ χρόνου τὴν ἀρχὴν οὔτε τὸν θέντα πρῶτον, ἀλλὰ τὸν ἄπειρον αἰῶνα διατελεῖ νενομισμένα). See Farnell 1921, 351–352; Rohde 1925, 170, 201, n. 110 (in his view the terms μακάριοι, εὐδαίμονες, βελτίονες and κρείττονες allude to the expressions characteristic of the cult of heroes); Thönges-Stringaris 1965, 50, n. 7 ('menschliche Wertschätzung'); Clairmont 1970, 64–65; Pfuhl, Möbius 1977–1979(1), 'Exkurs: Heroisierung', pp. 47–48.

[125] The issue is, however, controversial, see Clairmont 1970, 64–71, 140–141; contra Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 202, n. 371.

[126] Of circa 1000 funerary inscriptions from Classical and post-Classical Athenian agora collected by D.W. Bradeen, only two contain the term ἥρως, Bradeen 1974, nos. 890 and 1046 (votive?). For the heroisation of Polydeukes, the favourite of Herodes Atticus, Tobin 1997, 99–107; Skenteri 2005. For the Athenian heroic iconography, Himmelmann 1990. The term ἥρως on Rhodes was used only occasionally, in most of the cases with regard to foreigners, Fraser 1977, 73–74, 76–81.

by the fact that in this region the traditional, literal sense of heroism was preserved. Referring to someone who had died recently as a ἥρως would have probably sounded most peculiar in Athens, for this custom led the comedy writer Plato (5th–4th century BC) to mockingly remark: 'Why don't you hang yourself and become a Theban hero?' (Τί οὐκ ἀπήγξω, ἵνα Θήβησιν ἥρως γένῃ:).[127] We are therefore justified to assume that in Hellenistic times the popularity of heroisation was significantly influenced by local factors.[128]

Even in places where epitaphs did use the term ἥρως they were still in a small minority. For example, of the 160 published tomb inscriptions with portraits from Macedonia only eight used the word ἥρως.[129] Only six Imperial period funerary reliefs mentioned ἥρως or ἡρώων out of the 600 catalogued by D. Von Moock (though most of these reliefs lacked inscriptions of any sort). We are therefore obliged to consider whether this was something that concerned a very specific group of deceased. The term sometimes appears on tombs adorned with 'heroic' reliefs, usually depicting banquets or armed riders. Here the term seems somehow associated with the depicted scenes, but, as I mentioned earlier, elsewhere there is no clear correlation between use of the term ἥρως and such imagery. On the other hand, in many cases such deceased termed as heroes were very young or unmarried, childless individuals. Their herms (particularly common in Thessaly) depicted heroes without beards. Characteristic features on the tombs of pupils, gymnasts,[130] ephebes and νέοι included diptychs, scrolls and vessels for holding ink. The young age of these heroes was also suggested by epithets, such as ἥρως προγάμιος,[131] κοῦρος ἥρως or νέος ἥρως.[132] The most unusual evidence is an epitaph from Kos for a father, mother and three sons, of whom only the sons are referred to as heroes.[133] It is also rare for the lifetime professions of the deceased to be mentioned in such inscriptions.

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127 Kock 1880–1888(1), Platonos, fr. 75 = *PCG*(7), no. 77; see Garland 1985, 10; Himmelmann 1988, 355 and Himmelmann 1990, 62–63.

128 Price 1984, 36. Ἀγαθοὶ δαίμονες were popular in Caria, whereas the term ἀφηρώϊξε for heroisation was used almost exclusively on Thera.

129 Lagogianni-Georgakarakos 1998, nos. 2, 3, 21, 25, 27, 29, 78, 102. The term is classified as a standard epithet of the dead, next to γλυκύς and σεμνός. See also Alexandrescu-Vianu 1975. Telling are the statistics drafted by Graf 1985, 134, n. 96, and the remarks on pp. 131–132.

130 *Peek GV*, no. 663; *IGUR*(3), no. 1370.

131 Cremer 1991, 61–64.

132 E.g. *SEG*(1), no. 324.

133 Paton, Hicks 1891, no. 337, see Graf 1985, 131, n. 78. In an epitaph from Macedonia one who died at the age of 70 is described as ἥρως, Dušanic 1994, no. 1.

Therefore, insofar as iconography and epigraphy provide us any indications, in many cases (if not indeed the majority of cases) heroisation concerned children, adolescents or young adults.[134] The prerequisite for their heroisation was their premature death. This was the only 'social' aspect of heroisations that is relatively well documented in funerary epigrams.[135] Naturally, in assessing the proportion of young people who were heroised one has to accept the fact that from the demographic point of view mortality was actually the highest among the young and for this reason alone the incidence of heroisations would also be higher. However, this was not the only privilege mentioned on the tomb inscriptions of the prematurely deceased. In Peek's collection of epigrams, of the 16 cases mentioning a destination to the land of the pious chosen ones (τόπος εὐσεβῶν) as many as 6 times it concerned those who had died young. It also seems that in the case of the prematurely deceased, funerary epigrams more frequently call on the deities of fate and the underworld. Here the term's use almost exclusively concerns people who died under the age of 30. Moreover, the prematurely deceased were more frequently allowed to 'speak for themselves' (i.e. the epigrams were written in the first person); in Vérilhac's collection of epigram's for παίδες ἄωροι the proportion is 107 out of 201 inscriptions.[136] It therefore seems legitimate to conclude that to a large extent heroisation concerned the prematurely deceased.

The problem, however, arises when it comes to establishing the possible motives why just some of the deceased were so privileged after death, for here we can only work on assumptions. The matter is further complicated by a certain contradiction between what epitaphs and tombs heroising the deceased express and what we know from archaeology and literature to have been practiced at funerals. Normally, the funeral ceremonies and burials of children were very modest.[137] Frequently they were simply interned in large vessels or overlapping terracotta tubs; their bodies were rarely cremated. Sometimes they were buried within the city limits or even in family homes,

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134 Graf 1985, 132, 134–135; Johnston 1999, 153–155; Graf 2008, 146. For the heroisation of children, Cumont 1949, 324–327; Vérilhac 1978(1), nos. 192–201.

135 Hallett 2005, 56–60. Occasionally some social factors are recognisable, e.g. in Pergamon ἥρως was used predominantly for Roman citizens, Habicht 1969, 24. On Rhodes and in Attica such honours went, as it seems, to foreigners primarily.

136 Tybout 2003b; Casey 2004, 86–88.

137 As substantiated by archaeological finds and Plutarch's testimony, *Consolatio ad uxorem= Moralia* 7.612a–b. See some recent collections of studies: Scott 1999; Guimier-Sorbets, Morizot 2010; Lally, Moore 2011. See also Engemann 1973, 58–59.

even though all burials within city boundaries were normally prohibited. Few gifts were left in their graves. Most likely explanation is that in their case standard funeral procedures and cults were not necessary, as children's deaths did not occasion much μίασμα, i.e. pollution. This 'frugality' did not necessarily signify indifference in face of the frequency of deaths in that age group. Perhaps there was a belief that children, who had not had a chance to fully partake in life, this 'mortal coil,' found it easier to return to the other world and did not require such expensive 'send-offs.'[138] They had not yet properly entered the community of the living, which was why leaving it was easier for them and did not carry such far-reaching consequences.

Furthermore, we are informed by literary sources that if the prematurely deceased, as so-called ἄωροι, were indeed distinguished from the other dead, it was in a rather negative way. They were considered to be dangerous daemons, forced to wander the earth before entering the other world. There was a very widespread belief that, after death, the young suffered a worse, much more pitiful fate, though for some reason epitaphs never mention the suffering of the souls of the prematurely deceased.[139] F. Cumont has tried to explain this paradox by assuming a sort of 'réaction morale' from the relatives.[140] In other words, heroisation was an attempt to pre-empt the deceased child's misfortunes in the afterlife. A similar principle applied to the treatment of those who had drowned (a death that precluded a proper burial), for in such cases the deceased were also heroised or even underwent apotheosis.[141] Although this interpretation has not been confirmed by historical sources,[142] the notion that deceased children and youths were compensated for the experiences and achievements that they had missed out on in life by being granted the honour and special, higher status of a hero in the afterlife does seem fairly plausible.[143] It is not without significance that, in all probability, epigrams and extravagant tombs were chiefly used to honour those who had died at an early age even starting in the Archaic period. Then from the Hellenistic period onwards this instinctive feeling was given a

138 Plutarch, *Consolatio ad uxorem* = *Moralia* 7.611e, see Griessmair 1966, 43.

139 Cumont 1949, 303–341; Griessmair 1966, 28–30. For ἄωροι, *BE* 1954, no. 286; Johnston 1999, 127–160.

140 For the phenomenon of children's serial initiations into mysteries, Cumont 1942, 281–283.

141 Hermann 1966, 376.

142 Wrede 1981, 109.

143 *Peek GV*, no. 1197 and *Kaibel EG*, no. 189; *Peek GV*, no. 1128 and *Peek GV*, no. 1157; in *Kaibel EG*, no. 262 the dead is described as μέγας ἥρως, who was ἄνυνφος in his lifetime.

philosophical and spiritual aspect. In Greek and Latin literature, in the consolations of Menander Rhetor and Crantor as well as the writings of Cicero, Seneca and Plutarch we see an idea emerge that heroisation was associated with an educational process, a sublimation of the individual based on intellectual and spiritual development; it was a cleansing of the carnal and material instincts to come closer to the perfection of divinity and the world of the gods. Such heroisation primarily concerned those who were learned and philosophers, but it also included ordinary mortals, such as children and youths, who had been at the threshold of such a course and were able learn the basic principles of culture. Thus the great emphasis expressed in epitaphs, and on the numerous child tombs that the deceased had made considerable progress in their education—parents felt this was a prerequisite for their child's heroisation and immortality. Any child that died after they had commenced their education could be heroised. When a younger child died before he had started studying, epigrams sometimes mention purity and innocence as a possible reason for heroisation.[144] In their case, returning to the home of the gods was easier because their souls had not been sullied by mortal life. They did not need to undergo the arduous, time consuming process of purification through culture.[145] But above all death at a young age quite naturally suited the idealised view of heroisation, as heroes and gods were invariably depicted as beautiful youths. It is not without significance that death at a young age was such a popular theme in Greek myths about heroes.[146]

144 Pseudo-Plutarch, *Consolatio ad Apollonium* = *Moralia* 2.120a. See e.g. *Peek GV*, no. 861; *Peek GV*, no. 1113 and *Kaibel EG*, no. 615; *IGRR*(1), no. 361; *Peek GV*, no. 1113; *IGUR*(3), no. 1351.

145 Cumont 1922, 115; Boyancé 1937, 329–347; Marrou 1938, 232–257; Boyancé 1944; Cumont 1942, 253–350; Seston, Perrat 1947, 146–149.

146 Brelich 1958, 90; Burkert 1985, 208; Graf 1985, 132, n. 85; Cremer 1991, 69; see also Pache 2004, 181.

CHAPTER FOUR

MARRIAGES WITH THE GODS

Gods Abducting Mortals

This part of the book is concerned with death at a young age often being seen as a symbolic marriage to the gods of the underworld; occasionally, the conclusion of the marriage was preceded by abduction. The first chapters included in this section deliver a brief, critical survey of modern scholarship. It appears that—contrary to a number of scholarly opinions—in the context of elevating the dead to the level of supernatural beings on verse-inscriptions, the meaning of wedding imagery was neither mystic (Orphic) nor eschatological (Eleusinian mysteries). My intent is to demonstrate that it was rather an embellishment and/or dramatisation (sometimes a highly sophisticated one, as was the case of the epigram for Theophile, discussed at length in the fourth chapter) of the basic idea of divine abduction, conveying the message of the beauty of mortals prompting the gods themselves to descend and embrace them.

When death occurred late in life, it was usually regarded to be in the natural order of things. However, when death came early, this order appeared to be disrupted, and the ancient Greeks frequently attributed it to the intervention of celestial or chthonic powers.[1] Epigrams frequently spoke of the deceased being abducted by deities, but other scenarios were also possible. The usual causers of death included Moira or the Moirai,[2] or Hades.[3] It was frequently a δαίμων or δαίμονες[4] as well as the personification of 'envy,' Phthonos,[5] or a βάσκανος δέ τις.[6] Less frequent abductors included Heimarmene and Tyche, Thanatos, Eileithyia, Ares, Persephone, Charon, Ge

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[1] Herkenrath 1896, 17–19 and 21; Festugière 1932, 152–160; Lattimore 1942, 146–151; Vérilhac 1978(2), 173–185; Pfohl 1983, 472–473; Le Bris 2001, 103–106; Peres 2003, 180–196.

[2] Mayer 1927, 16–18.

[3] *Kaibel EG*, no., 'Index II' s.v.; *SGO*(5), s.v.

[4] Nowak 1960; Clairmont 1970, 84, n. 45; Stichel 1982, 193, n. 58; Garland 1985, 162.

[5] *Peek GV*, no. 583; *IGUR*(3), no. 1275; *Peek GV*, no. 858; Bousquet 1981; *SEG*(31), nos. 289–291; *SEG*(35), no. 630. See the references in Ehrhardt 1994, 48–49.

[6] *MAMA*(3), no. 556 (prose).

(Earth), Hermes, Chronos,[7] Hora,[8] and even—in exceptional instances—Ananke.[9] Therefore the perpetrators were most often deities associated with fate or the underworld as well as various lesser deities or 'daemonic' powers. In Archaic times the dead were usually received by Hades and Persephone in the underworld, whereas death itself was caused by more abstract powers, such as μοῖρα, κήρ and θάνᾰτος. In Hellenistic times, on the other hand, the abducting was more frequently attributed to the chthonic deities; this role was also performed by daemons, Moira and Tyche.[10] In most cases responsibility for the abduction of the deceased to the other world, from which they did not return, was attributed to the hostile or at best indifferent Hades. He could 'abduct' a wedding itself,[11] he could even abduct representatives of his own sex, e.g. a deceased male who was sent (πένψας) to the θαλάμοις of Persephone,[12] or Hades could even take a husband from his own wife.[13]

Nevertheless, the most widespread mythical paradigm for the abduction of the dead was the actual kidnapping of Persephone by Hades. Numerous depictions of this myth have survived on Greek vases from the Classical period, ones which quite frequently originate from tombs.[14] By the Greco-Roman period they became almost exclusively an aspect of funerary art. They appear on over a hundred sarcophagi, funerary paintings and mosaics. They are a particularly common feature on sarcophagi (including those of men). There are also urns and funerary reliefs showing the characteristic image of an overturned basket and a bird flying out of it, images which most likely refer to the Persephone myth. The girl was picking flowers on a meadow and putting them in her basket, which was next overturned when Hades abducted her. In this way the basket came to symbolise the deceased or her soul, which was abducted by the god of the underworld. There were many variations on this theme. For instance, a Hellenistic relief

7 As πανδαμάτωρ, *Peek GV*, no. 850; Bernand 1969, no. 16; Horbury, Noy 1992, no. 39.

8 Dunant, Pouilloux 1954–1958(2), 196–197, no. 370; Feissel 1983, no. 265.

9 *Kaibel EG*, no. 156; *Peek GV*, no. 1759; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 195. The Fate (εἶλε μόρος) in Al Muzzeini, et al. 2003, see *SEG*(51), no. 2212; *AE* 2003, nos. 1883–1885; *SEG*(53.2), no. 2057; *BE* 2004, no. 447.

10 Díaz de Cerio 1998, 59–62, 66, n. 52.

11 *MAMA*(8), no. 65; *SGO*(3), no. 14/11/01.

12 *Kaibel EG*, no. 201; *Peek GV*, no. 1541.

13 As Πλουτεὺς, *MAMA*(10), no. 169; *SGO*(3), no. 16/31/83.

14 For the Classical λήκυθοι, see the references in Wrede 1981, 12. For the wedding imagery in funerary context, Jenkins 1983; Evans-Grubbs 1989; Reilly 1989; Foley 1994, 81–82.

from Pamphylia presents at the deceased's feet the handpicked flowers which had fallen out of Kore's basket. They probably symbolised the untimely end of her burgeoning youth.[15]

Persephone and Hades in Funerary Epigrams

The myth, closely associated with the idea of a wedding in Hades or with Hades, was widely used in funerary epigrams both as a metaphor and as a means of stylising the deceased.[16] It particularly frequently appeared on the tombs of those who had died unmarried. One of the first funerary inscriptions to make a subtle allusion to the myth is a famous epigram preserved at the base of a limestone statue of a κόρη called Phrasikleia in Merenda (the ancient deme of Myrrhinous) in Attica, c. 540–550 BC:

> [I am the grave] marker of Phrasikleia.
> I shall always be called "kore"
> this name being my fate
> by will of the gods
> who deprived me of marriage. (transl. M. Stieber)[17]
>
> σε̄μα Φρασικλείας· κόρε κεκλέσομαι αἰεί, ἀντὶ γάμο
> παρὰ θεο̄ν τοῦτο λαχο̄σ' ὄνομα.

Even if we reject the risky supposition held by some scholars that the deceased Phrasikleia should be identified as Persephone (i.e. the maiden, κόρη, should be taken as the goddess, also named Kore), the epigram and the statue dedicated to her are probably the oldest evidence of the idea of burial as a wedding or as a wedding in Hades.[18] The poet equates a wedding with death; the statue presents Phrasikleia dressed as a young bride, reminiscent of the attire worn by Persephone in her wedding with Hades (the head gear, lotus flowers and a pomegranate). She became an eternal κόρη, virgin, maiden, for it was not for her to become a γῦνή, a woman; so too a lavish

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15 Cumont 1917, 89–90; Nollé 1983, 123–124; Nollé 1985, 126–133; Cremer 1992, 29, 100–102 and pl. 2; Hoti 1994. Regarding sarcophagi, Huskinson 1996, 117–118.

16 Klinz 1933; Cook 1914–1940(3.2), 1025–1065 ('Appendix R The Hieros Gamos'). For the wedding imagery in the myth of Persephone's abduction, Rose 1925; Carcopino 1943, 110–111, 358–359; Avagianou 1991, 113–143; in the afterlife Schrader 1904; Picard 1948; Turcan 1958; Lohmann 1993, 109; Schwarzmaier 2006, 208–211.

17 *Kaibel EG*, no. 6; *Peek GV*, no. 68; *CEG*(1), no. 24.

18 Vermeule 1979, 223–224, n. 25.

funeral was given to her in place of a lavish wedding. Thus, the tradition of Hades kidnapping the deceased and/or marrying them in the underworld is deeply rooted in Greek culture, which associates marriage with death and weddings with funerals.[19] In Book 7 of the *Greek Anthology*, which includes epigrams, the death of unmarried maidens is treated as a wedding.[20] In funerary poetry funeral ceremonies are compared to a wedding, and graves to nuptial chambers. The premature death of unmarried girls was sometimes likened to death during a wedding reception.[21] A typical example of theme for the Greco-Roman period is found on a limestone stele with the remains of a relief from Naucratis in Egypt, from the 1st–2nd century AD:

> [You did not cross] the saffron veil, nor did torches
> lead you to the wedding chamber, where desire breathes,
> Herakleides, son of the renowned Chairemon, but to the home of the Lethe.
> In retort your father, whom you were to care for in old age, despaired over the grave,
> striking terrible blows to his own chest.
> The whole city bewailed your fate, overcome with great sorrow;
> And mighty Hermes led you, shedding profuse tears,
> but he did not have the strength to protect you from a shameful [fate];
> even for him access to the underworld, which the Moirai miss, is denied.[22]

> οὐχὶ κρόκωι παστός σε διάβροχος, οὐδὲ νυ πεῦ̣κ̣α[ι]
> ἄγαγον ἐς νύμφας ἱμερόπνουν θάλαμον,
> κοῦρε μεγαινήτου Χαιρήμονος, Ἡρακλήδη,
> ἀ̣λλὰ σε πρὸς Λάθας ἀνιόχησαν ἕδος.
> στέρ̣να μετ' οἰμωγᾶς δὲ τάφου πέλας αἴν' ἐ̣[τ]ύ̣πησ̣εν
> ἐπλατάγησέ τ' ἑὰ γηρόκομος γενέτας,
> π[ᾶ]σὰ τε σὸν στενάχησε πόλις βαρυκαδέα πότμον·
> καὶ σε μέγ' Ἑρμείας μύρατ' ἄναξ ἀ̣[π]ά[γω]ν,
> [ῥύ]σασθαι λ̣ώβας δ' οὐκ ἔσθενεν· [ο]ὐδὲ γὰρ̣ αὐ̣[τὸς]
> νερτέριον Μοιρῶν νόσφι λέλογχε πάτ̣ον.

The epigram sharply contrasts between what should be (a joyful wedding) and gloomy reality (universal despair). The wedding customs mentioned at the start are interesting as evidence that such texts, even the most stereotypical ones, could be set in the realities of the day. They were selected for a reason, to simultaneously allude to both a wedding and funeral. The word 'lead' (in Greek a verb that literally means to 'drive,' 'hold the reins') alludes

19 For different mythological patterns, Barringer 1991; Barringer 1995, 95–109, 129–132.

20 *AP* 7.13 and 221, 492, 507, 712; see Rose 1925, 238, n. 2.

21 Lohmann 1993, 103, 106–108. For this motif in the *Greek Anthology* and in the Greek novels, Turcan 1963, 153–156; Szepessy 1972.

22 *Peek GV*, no. 1823; Bernand 1969, no. 67 and cor. on p. 3.

to a funeral hearse but also the carriage that traditionally carried the young bride to the house of her groom. The torches mentioned here are ones that accompanied wedding processions. The most important of these was carried by the bride's mother to light the fire in the groom's household. This was such an important and characteristic feature of wedding ritual that illegitimate marriages were described as 'nuptials without torches.' But torches were also used to accompany the deceased to the cemetery (when they were buried before dawn or interned in a dark tomb), and they were also used to light funeral or sacrificial pyres. Similar dual meanings were evoked by saffron. In the Hellenistic era or later, in the Greco-Roman period, an Eastern custom (from Egypt) was adopted in which a special tent or canopy was erected for the newly-weds. It also included shrouding their marital bed with an extraordinary, saffron-coloured veil. This was a luxury that only the wealthiest people could afford, as a vast amount of flower petals was needed to produce saffron. At the same time saffron (as well as other flowers) was also used in the funeral ceremonies and cults of the deceased. Both weddings and funerals were associated with a painful separation from a way of life, from the family, and a departure into an unknown, alien place. They both involved ritual ablutions and anointing the body with oils and perfumes, the donning of special garments, prior to being laid on the 'bed' or in the coffin, in the nuptial chamber or the grave. They both included ceremonial costumes, ribbons, wreaths and torches.[23] In both cases participants left a house and went out into the street to form a suite or procession. Both newly-weds and the dead travelled on a carriage at night (though funerals were not conducted so much after dusk as before dawn). Both cases involved crowds of people carrying gifts and offerings, playing instruments, ritual singing and shouting, and both cases involved feasting. Both ceremonies were subject to special regulations limiting scale and level of extravagance. Since at least the 6th century BC, there was a widespread custom of placing on graves vessels that had been used in wedding ceremonies, the so-called λουτροφόροι. They were frequently placed on or inside the tombs of those who had died before being able to marry. Λουτροφόροι were also presented on funerary reliefs near the figure of the deceased.[24] It is not out of the

[23] Bernand 1960, 143; Schneider 1969, 217; Redfield 1982, 188–189; Seaford 1990, especially 76–77; Alexiou 2002, 120; Ferrari 2003. See also Artemidorus, *Onirocritica* 2.49 and 65.

[24] For some other examples of wedding imagery in funerary context, Wolters 1891, 380, no. 15; 399–400; Wolters 1896; von Salis 1920–1924, 211–215; Thimme 1967; Thimme 1969, 21–22; Simon 1972, especially 213–220; Roberts 1978, 188, n. 20; Lohmann 1993; Barringer 1995, 104–105, n. 37; Schwarzmaier 2006, 188–189, 202–205; Cabrera, Bernabé 2007.

question that they symbolised 'nuptials.' However, their context has not yet been fully explained and is still a subject of discussion. Most scholars agree on one point, namely that such vessels usually adorned the tombs of persons who had died unmarried and childless.[25]

Mystic Wedding?

Many scholars of the 19th-century and early 20th-century were tempted to search for deeper meaning in the mentality and religiosity of the ancients to explain the wedding symbolism. In their opinion, in its essence, this was compensation for a premature death and an unfulfilled life without marriage or offspring. The purpose of this compensation was to avert the wrath of the spirits of the prematurely deceased, the so-called ἄωροι.[26] This theory, however, is not very reliable as it clearly overestimates the role played by such fears in the ancient world. Equally popular in its time was a theory that the kidnapping of Kore/Persephone myth alluded to initiation to womanhood, a rite of passage from childhood to maturity. This was suggested by the name of the goddess: the word κόρη above all meant a young girl at the threshold of maturity.[27] Looking at it subjectively, a wedding was like the death of a child, who now became a married woman, irrevocably and painfully separated from her family and home. It meant entering the adult world and taking up the role of being a wife and mother. At the same time academic interest was raised in the theme of death being an initiation to the afterlife, the passing on to an otherworldly dimension. The two ceremonies, funerals and weddings, were interpreted as analogous 'initiations.'[28] At the turn of the 20th century scholars, inspired by this analogy as well as the spectacular discoveries of contemporary anthropology and comparative religious studies, proposed some very bold theories regarding ancient beliefs and symbolism. The most influential hypothesis was formulated by J.C. Lawson. In his opinion, the ancient Greeks believed that the deceased married gods in the underworld. After death, those initiated in the mysteries of the afterlife were 'married' to the gods of the underworld, Persephone and Hades, and there were rituals to symbolise such 'weddings.'

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25 See the recent study by Mösch-Klingele 2006.

26 Frazer 1898(5), 389; Lohmann 1993; contra Wolters 1891, 399–400.

27 Jeanmaire 1939, 269–279, 298–305. Contra Penglase 1994, 155–157. Various interpretations of the myth are presented by Richardson 1974, 284–285; see also Gerhard 1850; Lincoln 1979; DeBloois 1997.

28 Redfield 1982.

In other words, every Greek man was one day to enter the goddess' (Persephone's) bridal chamber, and every Greek woman would one day enter the god's chamber (that of Hades). Such weddings were to lead to a happy existence in the afterlife. The earthly bliss following weddings on earth was supposed to be a prefiguration of this happiness in the afterlife. According to Lawson, such was the message in the mysteries of Demeter at Eleusis.[29] What is more, the idea of the weddings of people with deities was considered a fundamental doctrine of pagan mysteries in general (apart from the Demeter at Eleusis mystery, these concerned above all the cults of Aphrodite and Adonis as well as Cybele and Attis). They all promised a divine existence after death, in which the deceased retained both body and soul. But today appraisal of such theories is critical. Their basic weakness is that they combine diverse testimonies that in themselves do not constitute convincing arguments. With the exception of some rather unclear circumstantial evidence,[30] there is no text that in this context explicitly states ἱερὸς γάμος rituals and beliefs. All we have are a few references to sacred marriages with deities, e.g. the offering up of young maidens' virtues to the river god Scamander of the Troad[31] or the annual weddings of the wife of ἄρχων βασιλεύς with Dionysus in Athens.[32] But such traditions were not a very significant part of Greek culture and on such evidence one cannot say for certain that the ideas of mystic weddings were reflected in the funeral ceremonies.[33] In other words, the evidence at our disposal does not allow us to reconstruct a comprehensive religious doctrine based on the theme of marriage in the afterlife in the epitaphs. Among the most outspoken critics of this theory are scholars of ancient literature, for whom the writers of tragedies were rather using the marriages of deceased, young heroines to deities like Hades or Acheron (e.g. Antigone chosen by Acheron, Glauke married to an underworld deity or Iphigenia married to Hades) metaphorically to emphasise the pathos of untimely death.[34] As G. Ferrari has pointed out, the theme of

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29 Lawson 1910, 543–606 ('The union of gods and men'); Cook 1914–1940(2.2), 1162–1169 and ibidem(3.1), 370–396; for the recent variant of such interpretation, Cerkezov 1997.

30 Lawson 1910, 586, contra Festugière 1972; Kingsley 1995, 267, n. 59; Turcan 2003, IX–X and Bernabé, Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, 128–132.

31 Pseudo-Aeschines, *Epistulae* 10.680.

32 Pseudo-Demosthenes, *In Neaeram*, passim.

33 Rose 1925. For the wedding imagery in mysteries, Richardson 1974, 27, n. 3; Suter 2002; Parker 2005, 356–357.

34 Sophocles, *Antigone* 814–816, 891–894; Euripides, *Hecuba* 611 etc. For this motive, Petersen 1904, 102; Fontinoy 1950; Alexiou, Dronke 1971; Borghini 1986; Seaford 1987, especially 106–107; Rehm 1994; Stears 1995, 125–126.

death during a wedding did not have to be based on similarities between weddings and funerals. Conversely, the two could have been regarded as polar opposites, and served the purpose of accentuating the contrast. Ferrari notes that in essence giving away a daughter was based on the promise of fertility ensuring the birth of successors. A prematurely deceased virgin, as a νύμφη, became the wife of Hades in a childless marriage at a time when she should have been giving birth to children. Thus the natural order of things was turned upside down with barrenness replacing fertility and procreation. This was how the injustice and tragedy of premature death were further accentuated.[35] We cannot reasonably expect to find in such poetry any traces of belief in life after death or, more specifically, marriage in the afterlife.[36]

Orphic Hypothesis: Epigram for Theophile

Yet this does not mean that marriage mysteries did not exist at all. Occasionally, we do find allusions to such symbolism and even rituals in ancient literature and art.[37] In these few cases the presentation of death as a marriage cannot be entirely explained in terms of literary or artistic expression. With this in mind, M. Alexiou and P. Dronke have pointed to a particular example: a funerary epigram in Panticapaeum (present day Kerch, Crimea) from the 2nd–1st century BC. The beautiful Theophile of Sinope (whose hand, as was stressed, many a suitor desired) was kidnapped by Hades, who was in love with her, just like he had once fallen in love with Persephone. For this reason Theophile's father had to prepare torches for his daughter's wedding with Hades; and his daughter, instead of being betrothed to Menophilos, would have to share Kore's bed:

> I, the maiden Theophile, short-lived daughter of Hekataios,
> was sought in marriage by young men.
> But Hades came first and seized me, for he fell in love with me,
> seeing a Persephone fairer than Persephone.
>
> Even the letters inscribed on the stone column
> weep for Theophile, the girl from Sinope,
> whose bridal torchlight her father Hekataios
> lit for Hades and not for her wedding.

[35] Ferrari 2004. See also Danforth 1982, 83.
[36] Kurtz, Boardman 1971, 152–161; Garland 1985, 72–74.
[37] Reitzenstein 1904, 226–227; Dieterich 1923, 121–134; Schepelern 1929, 143–144; for parallel Christian traditions, Snyder 2011. Freymuth 1964 raised some reservations against overestimating the role of ἱερὸς γάμος in mysteries.

Maiden Theophile, not marriage, but the land of no return
is yours: no longer the bride of Menophilos,
you share Persephone's bed; your father Hekataios
has only the name of his poor dead one, and sees
your form in stone, while unjust Moira has plunged
his hopes deep in the earth, unfulfilled.

You, whose beauty was the envy of mortals,
Theophile, tenth of the Muses, a Grace
just ripe for marriage, unequalled in wisdom,
it is not Hades who clasped you in his dark embrace,
but Pluto who has taken you as bride, kindling
the marriage-torches in his chamber with light.
Father and mother, weep no more, lament no more;
Theophile has gone to the bed of the immortal gods.
(transl. M. Alexiou, P. Dronke)[38]

Θεοφίλη Ἑκαταίου,
χαῖρε.

Θειοφίλην με θύγατρα μινυνθαδίην Ἑκαταίου
ἐμνώοντο, γάμωι παρθένον ἠΐθεοι,
ἔφθασε δ' ἁρπάξας Ἀΐδης, ἠράσσατο γάρ μευ,
Φερσεφόνας ἐσιδὼν κρέσσονα Φερσεφόναν.

καὶ γράμμα πέτρης ἐκγλυφὲν στηλίτιδος
κόρην δακρύει Θεοφίλην Σινωπίδα
τὰς μελλονύμφους ἧς πατὴρ δαιδουχίας
Ἑκαταῖος Ἅιδηι καὶ οὐ γάμωι συνάρμοσεν.

παρθένε Θειοφίλα, σὲ μὲν οὐ γάμος, ἀλλ' ἀδίαυλος
χῶρος ἔχει νύμφη δ' οὐκέτι Μηνοφίλου,
[ἀ]λλὰ Κόρης σύλλεκτρος· ὁ δὲ σπείρας Ἑκαταῖος
οὔνομα δυστήνου μοῦνον ἔχει φθιμένης,
[μ]ορφὰν δ' ἐν πέτραι λεύ⟨ς⟩σει σέο τὰς δ' ἀτελέστους
ἐλπίδας οὐχ ὁσίη Μοῖρα κατεχθόνισεν.

τὴν κάλλος ζηλωτὸν ἐνὶ θνατοῖσι λαχοῦσαν
Θειοφίλην, Μουσῶν τὴν δεκάτην, Χάριτα,
πρὸς γάμον ὡραίαν, τὴν σωφροσύνης ὑπόδειγμα,
οὐκ Ἀΐδας ζοφεραῖς ἀμφέβαλεν παλάμαις,
Πλούτων δ' εἰς θαλάμους τὰ γαμήλια λαμπάδι φέγγη
ἧψε, ποθεινοτάτην δεξάμενος γαμέτιν.
[ὦ γ]ονέες, θρήνων νῦν λήξατε, παύετ' ὀδυρμῶν·
Θειοφίλη λέκτρων ἀθανάτων ἔτυχεν.

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[38] *Peek GV*, no. 1989; *CIRB*, no. 130; Alexiou, Dronke 1971, 837; Lange-Kulewska 1971, 43–44; Dovatur 1992; Zanker, Ewald 2004, 367–368.

In the second part of this epitaph, so full of despair, the tone suddenly changes to a manifestation of joy: the deceased as a goddess, as the tenth Muse, a Charis, did not become the bride of Hades but of Pluto. The parents were to cease lamenting because, after all, their daughter was cohabiting with immortal gods. The text consciously contrasts what the parents of the deceased girl believed (first part of the poem, full of grief) and what a voice from the grave informs them (second part of the poem, full of consolation).[39]

This particular epigram has proved to be exceptionally difficult to interpret. Its character seems to differ radically from all other epigrams using the kidnapping by Hades theme. Presenting Pluto as the god of death, instead of Hades, is quite striking. Nowhere else is there such an unequivocal declaration of the betrothal of the deceased to Pluto. At first sight it might seem that the best explanation is the specific nature of epigrams from the Panticapaeum region, which are known for accumulating mythological metaphors and their original meanings. Nevertheless, individual tombs in Panticapaeum do not constitute in any way unique examples of funerary poetry—all that is unique is the concentration of a particular type of poetry in one place. For example, the anthropomorphism of tombs (Theophile's epigram states that even the stele inscription weeps) appears in a certain number of epigrams in various parts of the Greek world.[40] Tombs appeared as mourners, the closest trustees or simply as companions of the deceased in their cemetery solitude. On a stele from 3rd–2nd century BC on Rhodes the deceased 14-year-old Daphnaios calls on surrounding graves and steles to weep over his fate and to tell everyone about him.[41] We also know of many other deceased women who like Theophile were included among the Muses;[42] there were even instances of deceased males being called the tenth Muse.[43] The allusion to the literal meaning of the name Theophile ('loved by the gods') is a common enough example of literary devices used in epigrams.[44] Even the 'plausible' mention of numerous suitors after Theophile's hand is a theme that appeared on the tombs of other prematurely deceased girls, used to emphasise their beauty and high social status.[45] Therefore,

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39 A. Chaniotis, per. litt.
40 Breuer 1995, 95, n. 282; 130, n. 356; 143–144.
41 *Peek GV*, no. 1248; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 92.
42 Vérilhac 1978(2), 323–325; Grandinetti 1999, 722.
43 *Peek GV*, no. 1767; Peres 2003, 230–231, 235.
44 Rodríguez Somolinos 2000; Chaniotis 2004, 42–43.
45 Pircher 1979, 46, 48, n. 17.

this regional peculiarity in itself does not explain much, yet in no epigrams from other regions of the Greek world do we find anything similar to this specific vision of the deceased being kidnapped in the afterlife.

Let us now look at some possible interpretations. According to M. Lange-Kulewska's explanation, at the start the epigram twice refers to Hades as the god of the dead, whereas in the end it refers to Pluto as the god of the dead. Elsewhere in the epigram the name Hades means the grave, as indeed in many other epigrams Hades is associated with the grave, the earth and death.[46] That is why Lange-Kulewska translated the text as follows: 'nie Hades objął mrocznymi rękoma' ('it is not Hades who clasped you in his dark embrace'). Thus we eliminate the problem of Pluto being taken to mean some other deity than Hades. But there seems to be a flaw in this explanation in that it is hard to imagine the inscription stating that a recently interred woman did not actually make it to her grave. Here we should assume that the author of the epigram consciously juxtaposed two different gods. Taking Hades to mean the grave would render this meaningless. A different interpretation has been proposed by P. Zanker. In his opinion this was the combining of Hades and Pluto as one person simply because these two deities were so frequently confused. Indeed, from the Classical period onwards Hades started being called Pluto, or at least henceforth the two gods were closely associated with one another. From that time on the two names were persistently confused, colloquially but also especially in poetry. No doubt the name *Pluto* was also used euphemistically instead of the much more menacingly sounding name *Hades*. The weakness of Zanker's interpretation, as in the case of Lange-Kulewska, is that it again ignores what must have been the author's intention: the author was quite aware of which gods were being referred to as the epigram clearly states that Pluto was not Hades. However, it was M. Rostovtseff himself who devoted the greatest attention to Theophile's epigram and he believed it to express Orphic beliefs, more specifically the Orphic interpretation of the fate of Persephone/Kore. He understood the inscription to express the typically Orphic theme of antagonism between Hades and Pluto. The epigram's specific phrasing he treated as yet more evidence (among other clues) of the popularity of the Demeter and Kore myth among the inhabitants of Panticapaeum and what it says about their beliefs in the afterlife. He even assumed the possibility of Orphic

[46] For the thin line between entering the grave and Hades, Herkenrath 1896, 28, n. 2; Horbury, Noy 1992, 81; Le Bris 2001, 30–31, n. 10.

and Eleusinian mysteries being 'imported' from Sinope. In his opinion, the Kerch region included many funerary epigrams which indicated that Sinope inhabitants held Orphic beliefs.[47] Indeed, Theophile herself had belonged to a family from that city.[48] Rostovtseff argued that such tombs expressed religious beliefs, popular among wealthy merchants from the Bosphorus region, which included a very specific, 'Orphic' concept of Hades and its rulers. A somewhat later tomb inscription from Panticapaeum (1st–2nd century AD) states that the deceased had escaped from the 'cycle' of earthly misfortunes or difficulties, which could possibly be considered an allusion to Orphic beliefs—though this is still a subject of debate.[49] Such inscriptions constitute potentially important and telling evidence because tomb inscriptions expressing such beliefs are rare; nonetheless they merely allude to the beliefs of the purchasers or addressees. Moreover, Panticapaeum, which had been founded by the city of Miletus, was situated close to another Milesian colony, Olbia, where well-known Orphic texts have been uncovered.[50] Already A.D. Nock noted that there were pieces of historical evidence from this region sharing a characteristic interest in the afterlife. These historical sources showed that a significant role was played by the Persephone myth. 1st-century AD paintings from graves in the Panticapaeum region depict the goddess' abduction, which according to Rostovtseff allude to Orphic beliefs.[51] Among them we find very specific presentations of Pluto.[52] Nevertheless, there are also fundamental doubts regarding Rostovtseff's theory. Indeed, the gloomy outlook for most of the deceased, who were bound for Hades,[53] together with a redeeming role being attributed to the underworld deities,[54] is quite typical of Orphic beliefs. Orphic tablets provide a decidedly positive portrayal of Persephone. There she is a friendly and sympathetic

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47 *Peek GV*, no. 1869; *CIRB*, no. 131 and *Peek GV*, no. 1265; *CIRB*, no. 129; *SEG*(52), no. 745; Tischow 2002. Hinge 2008 adds *Peek GV*, no. 529; *CIRB*, no. 117.

48 Rostovtseff 2004, 214–216 (in the original edition 165–166).

49 *Peek GV*, no. 1812; *CIRB*, no. 121; Casadio 1991; Bernabé 2004–2007(1), 467; for κύκλος, Bernabé, Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, 117–121; Torjussen 2008, 160–163.

50 Bilde 2008, 30–31.

51 Nock 1940, 303; Rostovtseff 2004, 214–216. Contra Stuart Jones 1916.

52 Πλουτῶν is shown as a young man with a clean-shaved chin; on the rarity of such imagery, Schauenburg 1953, 50, 57. For a group of roughly contemporary, Bosporan epitaphs mentioning Hades, see the references in *EBGR* 2008, no. 161.

53 Turcan 1956; Graf 1974, 80; Bernabé, Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, 18; Bernabé 2009.

54 Graf 1974, 151–181; Richardson 1974, 77–86; Kingsley 1995, 261, n. 37; Johnston, McNiven 1996, 30–34. For the allegorical interpretations of the abduction of Persephone, Förster 1874, 26–28, 39–49; Cumont 1942, 95–97; Magnien 1950, 37–44, 80–81, 83; Rioual 2005, 23–24.

goddess, as indeed are all the underworld deities.[55] No doubt there was also an association between the specifically Orphic interpretation of the Persephone myth and the Eleusinian mysteries. Orphic fragments constitute one of the most important historical sources for the reconstruction of the Persephone kidnapping myth, which after all was so prominent in Orphic literature.[56] Yet we cannot say for certain whether Theophile's epigram is actually an expression of Orphic belief. None of the phrases it uses can be said to be specifically Orphic. Virtually all of them appear elsewhere in the standard repertoire of funerary poetry. As we shall see, positive portrayals of Hades and Persephone as deities performing various redeeming roles in the afterlife also appear in other epigrams. Occasionally tomb inscriptions expressed the idea that selected mortals, the just and the pious, avoided entering the Acheron and instead encountered happiness in the afterlife.[57] One of the most interesting examples is the Latin epitaph for Iulia Benenata from Maktar in Tunisia. Even though the Acheron appears before the deceased's eyes, she is saved thanks to Proserpina-Persephone, the lady of the Elysian Fields.[58] And such examples need not reflect Orphic influences in any way. Moreover, the argument that for some reasons Orphism must have been largely widespread in the Panticapaeum region is in itself also rather unconvincing.

It seems to me that the key to interpreting this epigram lies in the contrast it draws between Hades/death and Pluto/eternal life, in consequence a dichotomy regarding the fate of the deceased, and not in mystic betrothals in the afterlife. This dichotomy is further emphasised by the meaning of the word *Hades*: not only as a grave and the land of the dead, but also the name of the god who ruled the earth and the underworld. In my opinion the

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55 Kingsley 1995, 267–272; Gavrilaki, Tzifopoulos 1998, especially 353–355; Pugliese Carratelli 2001, 100, 113; for the Orphic eschatology, Graf, Iles Johnston 2007, 94–136; Herrero de Jáuregui 2007, and the essays contained in Edmonds 2011.

56 Graf 1974, 151–181; Richardson 1974, 12, 77–86. The most important source, the *Hymn to Demeter* (c. 600 BC), was from the 2nd century BC onwards considered to have been authored by none other than Orpheus. Pausanias (1.37) referred to the secret Eleusinian mysteries to justify his discretion in this matter, stating those who had witnessed initiation ceremonies at Eleusis or read the Orphic books knew what he meant.

57 The epigrams belonging to the category 'Die Negation wird auf Lebensfuhrung oder Schicksal des Toten bezogen: "Nicht Hochzeit, sondern Tod," "Nicht tot, sondern bei den Göttern"' are collated by Peek GV, nos. 1810–1830; 'kontrastierender Typus' *Peek GV*, nos. 1754–1777.

58 Picard 1946; *AE* 1948, no. 107; Nilsson 1948; *AE* 1950, nos. 97 and 204; *AE* 1952, no. 45; Boyancé 1952c.

author of the epigram for Theophile consciously used the multiple meanings of this word, and had specifically in mind the first two meanings. Thus he could express Theophile's entry into the underworld and death (symbolically being kidnapped by Hades) as well as her rebirth (as symbolised by her marriage to Pluto). What remains to be explained is the use of the name Pluto in contrast with the name Hades. In this epigram Hades is presented as the destiny of ordinary mortals, whereas Pluto is the fate of the selected, including Theophile. It seems that the contrast between Hades and Pluto was emphasised not merely because Hades signified the grave and the land of the dead. In the context of Theophile's heroisation, Pluto's name also had specific connotations. We should not assume that the spreading of his cult arose from a spontaneous need to worship the god of the underworld in any different way than as a god of the dead, unlike, for example, the authors of the entry 'Pluto' in *Neue Pauly*. After all, there are traces of traditions according to which Hades and Pluto were seen as two different deities.[59] The Greeks occasionally made distinctions between the cults and iconographies of Hades and Pluto. Pausanias believed that Pluto was worshipped universally, while Hades, only by the inhabitants of Eleia.[60] Votive inscriptions frequently mentioned Pluto but very rarely Hades. Particularly at Eleusis, the Pluto cult was for a deity who, like Persephone and Demeter, was favourably disposed to humans.[61] He was frequently portrayed as a majestic elder with a sceptre, branch, *cornucopia*, pomegranate or drinking vessel (κάνθἄρος) in his hand; sometimes he was accompanied by an eagle.[62] His iconography resembled that of Zeus, and especially that of some chthonic personifications of the ruler of the gods, above all Zeus Meilichios.[63]

We can now go a step further. The nearest equivalent to the contrast between Pluto and Hades as presented in the Theophile epigram can be found in the *Orphic Hymns*, which are assumed to have originated from the τελεταὶ of the Dionysiac mystic circles in Asia Minor of the 1st–3rd centuries.[64] *Hymn* 41 worships Antaia, i.e. Demeter, the goddess who had searched for her daughter in Hades and discovered her in ἁγίων λέκτρων χθονίου Διὸς ἁγνοῦ, i.e. 'the sacred bed of the sacred chthonic Zeus.' This formulation in itself is not surprising because the name Zeus (as a synonym for deity

[59] Clinton 1992, 61–63; in the epigrams Mastrofrancesco 1999.
[60] Pausanias 6.25.2.
[61] Clinton 1992, 105–113; Clinton 1996, especially 166–167; Parker 2005, 336–337.
[62] Farnell 1896–1909(3), 280–288; Cook 1914–1940(2.2), 1105.
[63] Sjoevall 1931, 75–84; Scullion 1994, 88–90 and Henrichs 2005, 57.
[64] Graf 2009; Herrero de Jáuregui 2010, 35–36, 47–51.

and ruler) was used in reference to Hades-Pluto as the ruler of the underworld. In an interesting, though, sadly, only partly preserved inscription from Appia-Murathanlar in the Tembris Valley (in 3rd-century AD Phrygia) the deceased appeals to 'Zeus, god of the dead [φθιμένων], Pluto' to protect his grave.[65] The term 'Chthonic Zeus' could, however, mean something more than a mere euphemism for the name Hades.[66] The idea of defining Zeus as χθόνιος, κατα(χθόνιος), ἄλλος or simply as Hades had been present in ancient Greek literature from Homer to Nonnos. This was a sort of extension, aspect or 'shadow' of the universal power of Zeus in the kingdom of the dead, where he was the judge of the dead and also the consort of Persephone-Kore. Moreover, he was the provider of riches, Πλουτοδότης; a personification which was abbreviated to Πλούτων.[67] Among other things, he controlled the crops and it was to him (as well as to Demeter) that the farmers turned for the promise of a good harvest.[68] These are hardly well known traditions today.[69] Some scholars maintain that their obscurity is on account of the secret role they played in the mysteries. From our point of view, however, what is most significant is the fact that in essence Orphic soteriology was the hope placed on initiation, purification and apotheosis, which allowed the selected ones to take up a privileged place in Hades. In contrast to the glorification of the 'most holy' Pluto, who judged the deceased, one of the *Orphic Hymns* paints a very negative picture of Hades (the place). It is described as being where the throne of Hades the god is found, a far-off land (i.e. far from the earth's surface, where life flourishes), invincible and dead. It was personified as ἀκρίτων, insensible, undiscerning, i.e. unjust or ruthless.[70] Therefore the Orphics worshipped Pluto as the saviour and judge of the deceased, as Zeus χθόνιος.[71] They most likely assumed that Zeus had another embodiment of sorts in the underworld, in Hades. The effect of this assumption was the myth, known to us in several versions, of how Zeus had lain with Persephone (even though she was his daughter).[72] The so-called great Orphic tablet of

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65 Or Πλουτεὺς, *MAMA*(10), no. 60; see ad loc. Petzl 1995.

66 West 1965, 158–159; West 1978, 275–276.

67 See Cook 1914–1940(1), 503–504; Vikela 1994, 70–73, especially notes 97, 123, and pp. 109–113 (*epiclesis* employed as the name, Zeus Pluto = Pluto).

68 Hesiodus, *Opera et dies* 465.

69 Foley 1994, 110–111; Ricciardelli 2000, 347 ad l. 7 and 355 ad ll. 6–7; see also Kolb 1981, 31–33; Seaford 1994, 320–321.

70 *Hymni Orphici* 18 and generally Bernabé, Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, 43, 196–198. My interpretation differs from that of Ricciardelli 2000, 311 ad loc. See l. 16, where Hades—as god—is described as βρᾰβευτής, the judge of the dead in the underworld.

71 Pluto as Zeus χθόνιος, *Hymni Orphici* 18.4–5; 41.7; 70.2; see Ricciardelli 2000, 309–310.

72 Magnien 1950, 69–71, 81–83; Zuntz 1971, 397–398; Foley 1994, 110–111; Morand 2001, 166.

Thurii refers to the abduction of Persephone by Zeus, who then fathers her son, Dionysus.[73] Their child was revered by the Orphics as Dionysus Zagreus, Dionysus Iacchus, which shows how much importance they attached to the love affair of that particular couple.[74]

Thus in the Theophile epigram we are dealing with neither a manifestation of Orphic beliefs, as Rostovtseff assumed, nor any unique, mystic concepts of the deceased being identified with Persephone marrying a god in the afterlife as Dronke and Alexiou would have us believe. The fact that the name of the ruler of the gods was used in it in such a specific way, without any other epithets, without telling the reader that it refers to Pluto the 'chthonic Zeus' and his marriage with Persephone-Kore, was quite an extraordinary means of expression. The author probably tried to use the element of surprise to emphasise the paradox of the deceased girl's fate and make the reader think. Yet the epigram expressed something more than a simple allegory of a violent death, for in a very specific way it poetically spoke of the deceased's heroisation.[75] In symbolically expressing the attainment of happiness in the afterlife the poet drew on ideas used in mystery cults of the period, whose members (as indeed the authors of the *Orphic Hymns*) were in turn inspired by ancient traditions and symbols. But the author of the epigram need not have been a cult member himself, and neither did the deceased Theophile.

Persephone, Eleusinia, and the Underworld

This does not make the epigram from Panticapaeum any less original, for the vast majority of other funerary epigrams portrayed the abduction of Persephone very pessimistically, in accordance with Homer's description of the fate of the deceased. Normally they provided no visions of a better life after death and the return from the underworld associated with the soteriological/mystery aspect of the Demeter and Persephone cult.[76] The Eleusinian mysteries, which recalled the return of Kore/Persephone to her mother,

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[73] Bernabé 2004–2007(2), no. 492 F; Bernabé, Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, 137–149, especially 148–149.

[74] West 1983, 243–245; Burkert 1985, 200, 222, 294, 297; Fossum 1999, especially 308.

[75] Wrede 1981, 151.

[76] Cole 1984, 46; Parker 2005, 367. See, however, the epigram from Amphipolis (?) in Macedonia presenting blissful life as a result of initiation, Graf 1974, 80–81; Karadima-Matsa, Dimitrova 2003; *EBGR* 2003, no. 83 and ibidem, 2004, no. 247; Dickie 2005, 36–39; Dimitrova 2008, no. 29; *SEG*(55), no. 723.

Demeter, were practiced until the end of the 4th century AD. And they inspired other mysteries that became widespread throughout the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman world. It is not improbable that these also included theatrical performances of the abduction.[77] Yet despite this, epigrams usually presented Persephone's home and her attitude to the deceased in a decidedly negative way, similarly to that of Hades.[78] The inscription on the tomb of a woman who died during the holiday of Demeter (Teos, 2nd–1st century BC) sees no hope in the afterlife and mentions no apotheosis. This is so even despite the fact that it refers to ritual ceremonies concerning the abduction of Persephone by Hades. In the epigram Hades kidnaps the deceased just like he once kidnapped his lover:

> Soothe Persephone's envy, golden Stratonike,
> for the lord of the dead abducted your beauty,
> making your husband, Aristonax, a widower,
> and your unfortunate Eirene and father (who bears the name of Artemis)
> depriving of a wonderful child.
> You did not succumb to wasting diseases,
> but to the fast arrow of death
> during the sacred ceremonies of Demeter;
> when once Kore had been abducted by Hades, who [now]
> took for himself your beauty.[79]

> στέλλεο Περσεφόνας ζᾶλον, χρυσέα Στρατονίκ[η·]
> σὰν γὰρ ἄναξ ἐνέρων ἅρπασεν ἀγλαΐαν,
> χηρώσας ὁμόλεκτρον ᾿Αριστώνακτα, καὶ οἰκτρὰν
> Εἰράναν ἁβρᾶς παιδọ̀ς ἀπορφανίσας,
> καὶ πατέρ᾿ ᾿Αρτέμιδι ξυνομώνυμον· οὐδέ σε νούσων
> τακεδόνες, θανάτου δ᾿ ὠκ̣ὺ δάμασσε βέλος
> ἁγναῖς ἐν θαλίαις Δαμάτερος, αἷς ἔνι Κούραν
> μάρψεν ὁ καὶ τό τεὸν κάλλος ἑλὼν ᾿Αΐδας.

The abduction scene was a poetic means of praising the deceased's beauty. Such a 'mundane' interpretation of the Persephone myth partly results from the fact that its eschatological message differs from that of other mythological abductions used in tomb inscriptions, such as those of Ganymede and Hylas. In their case the deity (or deities) abducted the selected mortal who would never return to his life on earth, but instead acquired immortality

77 Mylonas 1961, 261–264.

78 While in *Peek GV*, no. 844 we find ἱεροὺς [Περσεφόνης θαλάμους], in *IG* XII 7, 112 εἰς θαλάμους Περςεφ]όνης κ[ρυερούς]; in *Peek GV*, no. 969 ἦλ[θα προμο]ίρ̣ως τοὺς στυγεροὺς ἀδίκως Φερσεφ[όνης] θαλάμους etc.

79 *Peek GV*, no. 1551; Robert 1958a; *SGO*(1), no. 03/06/07.

in a different form (heroisation) and in a different, divine reality. The Persephone myth, on the other hand, concerns the abduction of a goddess, not a human mortal. Moreover, her 'resurrection' was perceived as a return to life here on earth, and not to a land of eternal happiness. Nevertheless, Persephone was occasionally a source of hope for the deceased. Firstly, on account of her mythological victory over death. Secondly, on account of her 'dual' nature, she was not only the ominous queen of the underworld but also a merciful goddess who could intercede on behalf of the deceased and help mortals return to the land of the living.[80] In a small number of epigrams Persephone listens to the prayers of the deceased and leads them to eternal happiness in the Land of the Blessed[81] or Elysium.[82] This role was also performed by other deities associated with the land of the dead, such as, Minos, Aeacus, Hermes and even the Moirai,[83] but above all by Hades, who most often kidnapped women,[84] but sometimes also men. And thus from Trikka in Thessaly (1st century BC) there is an epigram in which Pluto sends a physician called Gerys to the Land of the Blessed. Similarly, an epigram from Magalopolis in Arcadia (c. 100 BC) states that the deceased, another physician, was abducted (ἁρπαστὸν) by Hades, who sent him (πέμψεν) to the Land of the Blessed.[85] If therefore—as a matter of exception—the rulers of the underworld granted the deceased a sort of redemption or rather happiness in the afterlife, it resulted from their authority to judge the deceased rather than any particular role as divine redeemers.[86] It seems that these few examples with soteriological overtones were not associated with the mysteries and traditions of the Demeter and Persephone cult. The abduction of Persephone myth was similarly presented on sarcophagi reliefs, where in most cases it did not include any teachings with regard to the redemption or rebirth of the deceased in the afterlife.[87] Such ideas were only sometimes

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80 See the epigram from Macedonia, *IG*(10.2.1), no. 447 (χαῖρε δαὶ κἀ⟨ν⟩ φθιμένοισιν· οὐ γὰ⟨ρ⟩ θάνε⟨ς⟩, ἀλλά σε Κούρη σύνθρον⟨ον⟩ ᾿Εδωνήει παρεδρι⟨ό⟩ωντι φυλάσ⟨σ⟩ει).

81 *Peek GV*, no. 842; *Peek GV*, no. 1572; *Kaibel EG*, no. 218, *Peek GV*, no. 1871. See the examples in Parker, Stamatopoulou 2004, 7.

82 *Kaibel EG*, no. 189; *Peek GV*, no. 1128; *Peek GV*, no. 1594.

83 *Kaibel EG*, no. 222; *Peek GV*, no. 48; Sève 1996.

84 E.g. *Peek GV*, no. 1148.

85 *SEG*(34), no. 325; Te Riele 1984; Te Riele 1986; *BE* 1987, nos. 616–617 and ibidem, 1988, no. 39; Samama 2003, no. 043.

86 Ricciardelli 2000, 313–314, 346 ad l. 5.

87 Boyancé 1942, 200, n. 1; 202; Andreae 1963, 45–49; Richardson 1974, 148; Sichtermann, Koch 1975, 56–59; Turcan 1978, 1730, n. 207bis; 1718, 1729–1730; Wrede 1981, 123, 131, 296–298, nos. 266–270; Koch, Sichtermann 1982, 175–179; Lindner 1984, 103–114; Turcan 1999, 47, n. 217; Zanker, Ewald 2004, 94.

Figure 2. Sarcophagus from Florence, imperial; left side, Hermes and Alcestis.

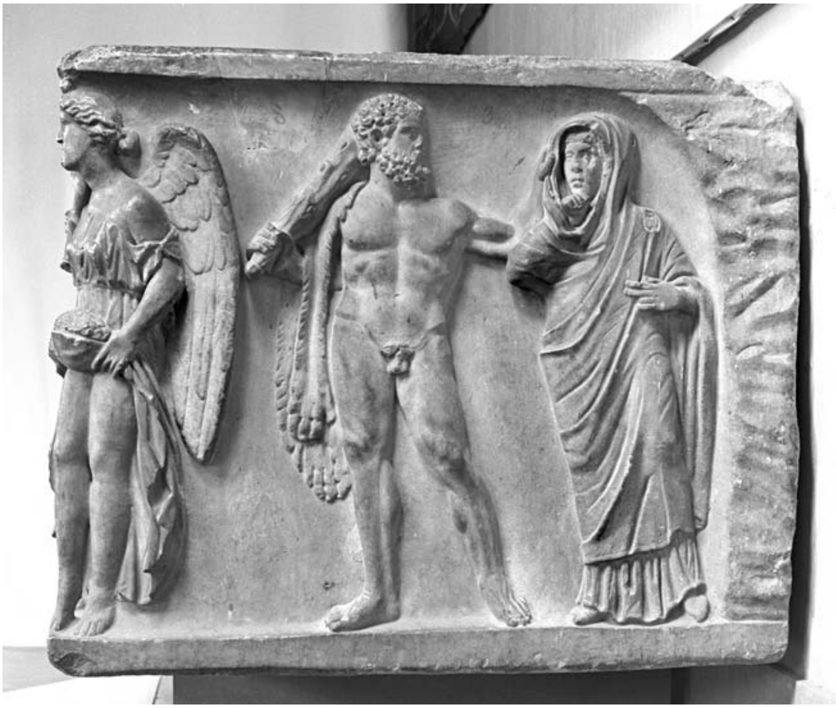

Figure 2a. Right side, Heracles and Alkestis.

Figure 2b. Front side, abduction of Persephone.

Figure 3. Abduction of Persephone on a sarcophagus from Rome, 3rd century AD.

stressed. The front of a sarcophagus from Florence (see fig. 2) presents the kidnapping of Persephone, whereas the side presents the freeing of Alcestis from the underworld. It is probable that here the two myths were used to symbolise victory over death.[88] A unique presentation is found on a sarcophagus, from the 3rd century AD at the Capitoline Museums (see fig. 3), where the deceased, depicted as Persephone, does not resist the embrace of Hades; instead she seems to be a willing participant in the abduction. Raising her veil with dignity, as if she were his bride, she simultaneously reveals to Hades her naked body, naturally, to emphasise its beauty. Heading towards Persephone is Victoria, holding a palm leaf as well as laurel wreath, and she is accompanied by Hercules with Cerberus at his feet. According to P. Zanker, here we see not so much an aesthetic attempt to lessen the brutality of abduction and rape or a specific form of consolation but instead a positive interpretation of the abduction by Hades myth.[89] As such it would be an interesting equivalent of the funerary epigram for Theophile.

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[88] Sichtermann, Koch 1975, 147 (pl.); Blome 1978, 453; Zanker, Ewald 2004, 92–93, nos. 74–76 (plts.).

[89] Sichtermann, Koch 1975, 148, 153 (plts.); Blome 1978, 450–453, 456–457; Koch, Sichtermann 1982, 607; Wood 2000; Zanker, Ewald 2004, 52, 93 (pl. no. 77), 93–94, 370–372.

Brides and Bridegrooms in Their Prime

The popularity of the Hades abduction and marriage theme in funerary epigrams did not generally stem from any deeper soteriological doctrine. The general similarities between wedding and funeral rituals were naturally a much more important factor; as mentioned, something people in antiquity were well aware of. Nevertheless, this parallelism should not be overrated. The similarities between weddings and funerals were, after all, only superficial. Both involved religious and family ceremonies, both symbolised transition from one phase of life to another, and so looking for links from this point of view may prove deceptive.[90] In such a way we could equally well point to the similarity between wedding celebrations and mysteries: similar washing and bathing rituals, both ceremonies termed as the τέλος of human life, the fertility symbolism, the married couple presented as τελεύμενα ...[91] The boy who during the wedding carried a λίκνον full of bread, thistles and acorns, declared words similar to those used during mystery revelations: 'They have escaped evil and found a better place.'[92] Those who died childless were described in a similar way as those uninitiated in the mysteries, the ἀτέλεστοι or the ἀμύητοι.

Therefore the similarities between weddings and funerals were significant, but they do not explain everything. The question arises: what was the function of such mythologizing and why was it such a popular theme in funerary epigrams? No doubt, here it was what the myth actually expressed that counted. Once again valuable suggestions may be provided by consolatory literature. According to Menander Rhetor (3rd–4th century AD) μονῳδία, i.e. lamentations, mourning for the dead (one of his three categories of rhetoric concerning the dead, beside παραμῡθητικός, i.e. consolation, and ἐπιτάφιος, i.e. λόγος, meaning the funeral speech) included among other things recalling the loss, bringing back the pain and despair, and then soothing the soul using an appropriate repertoire of arguments, including mythological comparisons. The suffering of the bereaved was mitigated by suggestively showing the sufferings and premature, tragic death of mythological characters.[93] It was therefore important to recall dramatic myths,

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[90] Dieterich 1913, 56–57. See the parallel testimonies on *pinakes* from Locri, Italy, Sourvinou-Inwood 1973; Sourvinou-Inwood 1978; for other possible interpretations, Ridgway, Scott 1973; Hadzisteliou Price 1978, 171–176; Lindner 1984, 119, n. 1; 141, n. 360.

[91] Ramsay 1911–1912, 51–54; Bieber 1949; Fontannaz 2008, 62, n. 141.

[92] Bieber 1949; Horn 1972, 104–105.

[93] Menander Rhetor 435.10 Russel, Wilson 1981; see Zanker, Ewald 2004, 110–111.

identify with the protagonists, to express emotions and provide a feeling of shared experiences. All this helped the bereaved to overcome the sense of loss. In a votive epigram from Knidos (end of 4th century AD) we find direct evidence that the Persephone and Demeter myth was indeed used for this purpose:

> Chrysina, mother of Chrysogone and wife of Hippocrates, dedicated to Kore
> and Demeter a shrine and a statue, after she had seen a sacred dream. For
> Hermes
> told her that she [Chrysogone] is an attendant of the revered goddess [?]
> (transl. A. Chaniotis)[94]
>
> Κούραι καὶ Δάματρι οἶκον καὶ ἄγαλμ' ἀνέθηκεν Χρυσογόνη[ς]
> μήτηρ, Ἱπποκράτους δὲ ἄλοχος, Χρυσίνα, ἐννυχίαν ὄψιν
> ἰδοῦσα ἱεράν· Ἑρμῆς γάρ νιν ἔφησε θεαῖς Ταθνηι προπολεύειν.

As Persephone's messenger, Hermes in a dream comforts a mother called Chrysine by saying that her deceased daughter, Chrysogone, was now in service at Kore-Persephone's side. As a result of this vision, Chrysine decided to erect a small shrine and a statue, dedicated (despite the fact that there was only one statue) to two goddesses, Kore and Demeter. No doubt the bereaved mother felt a natural affinity to the mother goddess. As we can see, bereaved relatives could thus identify with the tragedy and pathos of Demeter, who so desperately searched for her daughter,[95] or with other persons who tried to forestall misfortune and prevent the god of the underworld from abducting the deceased.[96] The fasting that, according to the myth, Demeter had undertaken may have set the example for the fasting that accompanied mourning. The abduction by a deity myth reflected well in the ambivalent nature of experiencing death: suffering, sense of loss and at the same time the insuppressible hope of seeing your loved one again. The deity was the perpetrator of the abduction, while the deceased became his wife and thus the lady of the underworld.[97] Reigning over the underworld at the ruler's side was a substitute for the land of happiness.

Nevertheless, the primary purpose of stylising deceased women as new Persephones, comparing or identifying them with this goddess, or stating

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94 *Kaibel EG*, no. 785; *CEG*(2), no. 860; *IK*(41), no. 131; *SGO*(1), no. 01/01/06; Rigsby 2003; *BE* 2004, no. 324; *SEG*(53.2), no. 1225; see the interpretation by Chaniotis, *EBGR* 2003, no. 143 and Chaniotis 2009, 63.

95 Zanker, Ewald 2004, 367–372.

96 Not infrequently on Roman sarcophagi, e.g. in the person of Athena herself.

97 See e.g *IGUR*(3), no. 1342, where the deceased woman is grateful to be in the possession of Pluto, as σύνθρονος εὐσεβέων.

that they were her worthy rivals was above all intended to emphasise their beauty and attractiveness. For this reason we have Hades plucking young women as if they were trees, fruits or flowers. A good example of the link between the abduction of the deceased and her beauty is an epigram from Lemnos (2nd century AD) where Hades abducted the young, 18-year-old Callisto and plucked the flower of her youth; the deceased resided among the pious as a σύνθρονος ἡρώων.[98] In an epigram from Arkades in Crete (1st century BC) Hades kidnapped (ἀπήγα⟨γ⟩ε) the deceased when he saw her beauty and virtue:

> Damatria, daughter of Quintus.
> O daughter of mine, whom for old age I kept,
> so that you could bury my grey hair, as was fitting.
> Came Hades, who inflicts pain; when he saw your beauty
> and immaculate character, at once abducted you [...][99]

> Δαματρία Κοΐντω.
> ὦ θυγάτηρ ⟨ἐ⟩[μ]οῦ, ἥν {γ'} ἔτρεφον ⟨γ'⟩ εἰς γῆρας ἐμαυτοῦ
> ὥστε τρίχ' ἂν πολιὴν [σὺ] καλύψῃς, ὡς πρέπ[ον ἐστί]·
> ἦλθε δ' ὁ δυς[πε]νθ[ὴ]ς 'Α[ΐδης] καὶ ἀπήγα⟨γ⟩ε [σ'] ὠ[κύ]
> καλλ[ο]σύνην τὴν σὴν ἰσιδὼν [καὶ] ⟨ἦ⟩θος ἄμεμπτον.

A sarcophagus from Rome (3rd–4th BC) recalls the betrothed of the deceased Igarios, who was prematurely abducted by Hades, making her his wife. The epigram ends with the statement that both had saved their virginity for Hades (or the grave—probably a deliberate double meaning).[100] An epigram from the island of Mykonos (Rheneia? 2nd–1st century BC) speaks of Hades appropriating the beauty of the deceased Isias (ἀλλὰ 'Αίδης τὸ τεὸν κάλλος ἐνοσφίσατο).[101]

This meaning of the myth becomes further pronounced by the thought-provoking fact that it links kidnapping with marriage. It exposes the passionate love Hades felt for the earthly maidens of his choice, and this did not agree well with the Greek concept of marriage, where passion played a secondary role. Following the example of Hades, Persephone also abducted people from earth. Alternatively, other deities, for example the Moirai, ab-

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98 *Kaibel EG*, no. 151; *Peek GV*, no. 1162 and for the motif, Lattimore 1942, 195–196. See also παντοίων χαρίτων κάλλος of a certain Aphrodisia taken to Hades, *Peek GV*, no. 1150; Bernand 1969, no. 35. For the symbolism of flowers, Bremer 1975; Slings 1978; Petropoulos 2003, 62–63.

99 *Peek GV*, no. 1553; Guarducci 1935–1950(1.5), no. 41. See also *Peek GV*, no. 958; Guarducci 1935–1950(2.10), no. 20; Bile 2000, 53–57; *AE* 32, no. 2000, 1588; *SEG*(50), no. 931.

100 *Kaibel EG*, no. 655; *Peek GV*, no. 658; *IGUR*(3), no. 1234 (Moretti gives some other examples of the motif 'de Hade invido qui puellas occupat').

101 *Peek GV*, no. 1681.

ducted mortals in Persephone's name. However, in the case of these abductions epigrams did not stress the attractiveness of the deceased and did not search for metaphors of love, even if the departed was indeed frequently bound for Φερσεφόνης θάλαμος.[102] This means that it was rather the idea of marriage with Hades that was first and foremost intended to proclaim the sensual and erotic beauty of the deceased.

Abduction of Young, Handsome Adonis

Additional confirmation of the importance of beauty's role in explaining the the inclusion of epigrammatic motifs is the poetic motif that we find in a related though little known type of funerary epigram. Thanks to a brief mention by the poet and rhetorician Ausonius (4th century AD) we know that the prematurely deceased were identified not only with Ganymede but also with Persephone's Adonis:

> Glad youth verging upon thy sixteenth year
> already was encircling thy soft cheeks with down,
> young Glaucias. And already thou hadst ceased to
> seem boy or maid indifferently when the day came
> too hurriedly and bare off all thy comeliness. Yet
> neither shalt thou join company with the common
> throng of dead, nor shalt thou, a piteous shade,
> dread the Stygian pools, but thou shalt go thither
> as Persephone's Adonis, the son of Cinyras, or thou
> shalt be the Ganymede of Elysian Jove. (transl. H.G. Evelyn White)[103]

> *Laeta bis octono tibi iam sub consule pubes*
> *cingebat teneras, Glaucia adulte, genas.*
> *Et iam desieras puer anne puella videri,*
> *cum properata dies abstulit omne decus.*
> *Sed neque functorum socius miscebere volgo*
> *nec metues Stygios flebilis umbra lacus,*
> *verum aut Persephonae Cinyreius ibis Adonis*
> *aut Iovis Elysii tu Catamitus eris.*

This is an important indication, because in this role Adonis was treated as an equal of Ganymede, a figure well known in funerary art and appearing in a large number of epigrams. The problem lies in the fact that there are

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102 E.g. *Peek GV*, no. 488 and *Kaibel EG*, no. 35, *Peek GV*, no. 1889, *CEG*(2), no. 593 and *Peek GV*, no. 1962. In *Greek Anthology* Page 1981, 185.

103 Ausonius, *Epigrammata* 62.

no extant tomb inscriptions concerning this particular theme. It is true that the love of a goddess, Tyche, for a mortal, Phileremos, who she has abducted from the world of the living by daemons is mentioned by an epigram from Beroia in Macedonia at the time of the Empire.[104] Moreover, a 1st-century epigram on a marble stele from Aphrodisias refers to Persephone's abduction of Adonis. Zenobios, son of Zenon, at the age of 25 entered the Acheron, abducted by Persephone to Hades out of love for his stature and beauty:

> Zenon, son of Artemidoros, priest of Zeus of the Goneis.[105]
> Odatis,[106] daughter of Dionysius, wife of Zenon.
>
> This stone wall, traveller, already conceals
> the noble Zenobios, son of Zenon.
> At the age of 25 he descended to the house of Acheron,
> leaving in the marital chamber
> his wife, fraught with concern [?].
> Persephone led him to the house of Hades,
> having fallen in love with his beauty and handsomeness.
> He left his own sisters double concerns [?],
> his heartbroken mother in tears and wailing.
> They laid him next to his brother; he caused them great affliction,
> and his town considerable sadness.
> Stop in your tracks, stranger, let tears well in your eyes,
> And say: "farewell you who [dwell] underground."[107]
>
> Ζήνων Ἀρτεμιδώρου, ἱερεὺς Διὸς Γονέων.
> Ὀδατις Διονυσίου, γυνὴ δὲ Ζήνωνος.
>
> τοῦτο τὸ λάινον ἕρκος ὁδοίπορε, τὸγ καλὸν ἤδη
> κοῦρον Ζήνωνος Ζηνόβιον κατέχει.
> πεντεκαιεικοσέτης κατέβη δ[όμ]ον εἰς Ἀχέροντος,
> λείπων ἐν θαλάμῳ [τρ]υχαλέην ἄλοχον.
> τοῦτον Φερσεφόνεια κατήγαγεν εἰς Ἀίδαο
> μορφῆς καὶ κάλλους εἵνεκε ἐρασσομένη.
> δισσὰ δὲ ἄλγη ἔλειπε κασιγνηταισι φίλαισιν.
> μητρὶ δὲ δειλαίῃ δάκρυ⟨α⟩ καὶ στεναχάς.
> γίτονα δ' αὐτὸν ἔθεντο κασίγνητοι, μέγα πῆμα,

[104] *Kaibel EG*, no. 526 (Kaibel: 'Quem Fortuna domina ad sese revocavit desiderio capta, quemque ipsi dei e vita seduxerunt'); *SEG*(24), no. 507; Gounaropoulou, Hatzopoulos 1998, no. 405.
[105] Some aristocratic family.
[106] Persian name; she belonged to a mixed family.
[107] Jones, Smith 1994, 455–461; *SGO*(1), no. 02/09/33 (cor. *SGO*[5], no. 24/06); Rigsby 2000, 114–115, no. 2; *SEG*(50), no. 1099; Reynolds, et al. 2007, no. 13.501.

πατρίδι δ' οὐκ ὀλίγον πένθος ἐνεγκάμενον.
ἀλλά γ' ὁδοιπορίην στήσας, ξένε, λείβεο κανθὸν
δάκρυσι καὶ χαίρειν ἔννεπε τοὺς κατὰ γῆν.

The 25-year-old's beauty is emphasised by successively using two synonyms, μορφή and κάλλος. The even quite erotic feeling Persephone has here for the young man is unprecedented. One may therefore consider the possibility that on male graves Adonis was an equivalent of Persephone in the role of abduction victim, as a sort of prototype of the deceased male taken by a goddess.[108] According to the myth, the hero was favoured by two rival goddesses, Aphrodite and Persephone, and so Zeus passed a judgement that half of the year Adonis would spend with Aphrodite on earth and the other half with Persephone in the underworld. In some of the versions of this myth Adonis had a sexual relationship with Persephone. One of the *Orphic Hymns* states that Persephone gave birth to Adonis. But scholars favouring a plainer interpretation of texts believe that he was victim of the goddess' sexual desires. He was not kept by Persephone as a child, but was actually her lover, just as he was Aphrodite's lover on earth.[109] There is no mention in Greek literature of this kind of relationship between the deceased and Persephone. In funerary epigrams references are limited to the deceased entering the goddess' marital chamber. Nevertheless, there exists written evidence of an interesting parallel drawn up between Adonis and Ganymede.[110] The Roman comedy playwright Plautus (3rd–2nd century BC) alludes to paintings depicting Ganymede being abducted by an eagle (Zeus) and Adonis being abducted by Venus.[111] It is not inconceivable that this was a reference to the similarity between the two handsome, young men; mortals who were taken in their prime by infatuated deities.[112] Thus the discernible association

108 Adonis on sarcophagi Picard 1939, 133; Wrede 1971, 150–151; Brilliant 1992; Koortbojian 1995, 23–62; Grassinger 1999, 70–90; Zanker, Ewald 2004, 208–213. See also the Latin epitaph *CIL*(6), no. 17050, where Venus and Persephone enter into a dispute about the fate of the dead, Waywell 1982; Koortbojian 1995, 25, n. 10.

109 *Hymni Orphici* 56.8–11: 'O sweet blossom and offshoot of Aphrodite and Eros, child born on the bed of lovely-tressed Persephone. Now you dwell beneath murky Tartaros and now again toward Olympus you bring your full-grown body.' transl. A.N. Athanssakis (ἔρνος Ἔρωτος, Φερσεφόνης ἐρασιπλοκάμου λέκτροισι λοχευθείς, ὃς ποτὲ μὲν ναίεις ὑπὸ Τάρταρον ἠερόεντα, ἠδὲ πάλιν πρὸς Ὄλυμπον ἄγεις δέμας ὡριόκαρπον·). See Studniczka 1911, 141–146; Richter 1920, especially 116; Atallah 1966, 297–298; Sourvinou-Inwood 1974, especially 129–132; Ricciardelli 2000, 449–452; Morand 2001, 166.

110 See Gow 1938, 194–200, for Theocritus' *Idyllia* 15, 124–135.

111 Plautus, *Menaechmi* 143–144.

112 Reed 1995, 331. For Adonis as Zeus' favourite, Wolbergs 1971, 67–68.

between these two mythological figures in the funerary context.[113] Unfortunately, there are no further known examples of Adonis being abducted by the goddess of love in ancient sources. Yet it is probable that this myth (and no longer existing funerary poetry) provides the context to a somewhat unclear statement by Tibullus (c. 54–19 BC) that it was Venus who took him to the Elysian Fields. According to commentators this is a unique portrayal in literature of Venus as a psychopomp.[114] Ausonius' epigram and the tomb from Aphrodisias probably provide us a bit of insight into a no longer existing epigram tradition that heroised the deceased by identifying them with the abduction of Adonis by Persephone. Therefore not only women but also men had a model of death (abduction) caused by the infatuation of a deity, and thus not only women but also men had their beauty recorded on tombstones.

113 Atallah 1966, 126–127, 292–301.

114 Tibullus 1.3.57–58: 'But me, because I have always been easily held by Love, Venus herself will lead to the Elysian fields.' transl. V.M. Hope (*Sed me, quod facilis tenero sum semper Amori, ipsa Venus campos ducet in Elysios*). See, however, the images of the goddess on Roman sarcophagi, Bayet 1922–1923, 47; Andreae 1963, 123; Horn 1972, 103. See also the epitaph for a certain Nepos, who was taken by Venus to heaven, *CIL*(6), no. 21521; *CLE*(2), no. 1109. According to Theocritus (*Idyllia* 17.46) Berenike, the daughter of Ptolemy III, was abducted by Aphrodite, who thus saved her from Hades, Grimal 1957; Heilmann 1959, 27, 34–37; Wrede 1981, 117; Koortbojian 1995, 113.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DECEASED AS THE CHOSEN ONES AND THE LOVERS OF DEITIES

'Those Chosen by Deities Die Young'

The high status of the dead might also have been manifested in ways other than apotheosis, heroisation or marriage to god or goddess. The idea of abduction by a god, often pervading the imagery of wedding in afterlife, contributed to the emergence of yet another category of the dead as imagined in funerary poetry. This was made of those beloved of the gods. Their beauty made them objects of desire, as they were sought after by divine suitors, and the moment of their death coincided with the abduction into the divine realms. Among them were the favourites of Zeus, who were presented as Ganymede himself. As we will see, in some specific circumstances of the prematurely dead their fate was interpreted as a promise of a happy afterlife, which might have influenced the form of their funerary cult. In most cases, however, we deal with a striking emphasis of the erotic nature of the relations between human and god. The praise of the beauty of the dead finds its most pronounced expression in this emphasis of divine lust.

In the very earliest Greek literature we already encounter the notion that deities would occasionally abduct individuals they took a fancy to.[1] These chosen ones lived on after 'death,' avoiding the destinies of other mortals. Homer's gods abducted people to Elysium or even to their own home on Mount Olympus, where they enjoyed immortality. Premature death appeared as the highest distinction awarded by the gods. Numerous mythological examples confirmed this view: the abduction of Ganymede and Europe by Zeus, of Adonis by Aphrodite, Persephone by Hades or of Tithonus by Eos. These traditions were widely expressed in funerary art. Two vessels (στάμνοι) from a grave in Capua (5th century BC) probably bear the clearest of such

[1] Dieterich 1965, 345–347 ('Appendix' 5); Roloff 1970, 83–101; Nagy 1979, 174–210 and the broader context outlined by Larson 1995, 16–18. For sarcophagi, Wrede 1981, 49–51; Turcan 1999, 45–49.

references. One depicts Eos and Cephalus as well as a youth with a spear and woman. The other στάμνος presents Boreas and Orithyia on one side and Eos and Cephalus on the other.[2] It is certainly not by chance that these themes were arranged in parallel. The abduction of Orithyia by Boreas was presented on Athenian πυξίδες, at least some of which were used as tomb offerings, and on ὑδρίαι that came from graves.[3] Such scenes most likely represented marriage and/or death.[4] Many of these vessels also depicted Eos abducting her chosen ones. Most originate from graves (particularly λήκυθοι), and were therefore most likely gifts or offerings.[5] In one of his so-called *Homeric Allegories* Heracleitos (1st–2nd century AD) tells us that abduction by Eos was a euphemism for a sudden and premature death. According to ancient custom, the dead were never buried during the hot day or in the dark night but at early dawn, when the first rays of the rising sun were not yet powerful. The funeral procession carrying the body of a well-born and good-looking young man was described as an abduction by *Daylight* (Ἡμέρας ἁρπαγήν). Such a procession would be accompanied by the conviction that the young man had been abducted while he was still alive; thus he did not die but was kidnapped by deities who had fallen in love with him.[6] The abduction was, in a sense, an act of favour. The mortal was selected by a deity on account of his intellectual, moral or physical virtues, and the deity desperately wanted to keep the mortal for itself. As cited by Athenaeus, grammarian Plutarch of Alexandria asks who is abducted by goddesses, and answers the most beautiful ones, with whom they live to this day: Eos with Cephalus, Cleitus and Tithonus, Demeter with Iasion, and Aphrodite with Anchises and Adonis.[7]

Such mythologizing of death did not necessarily have to provide any specific or concrete hopes regarding the afterlife. Presenting Eos on funerary vessels (particularly λήκυθοι) at most suggested that, like the heroes, the

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2 Beazley 1945, 157; Philippaki 1967, 83; Webster 1972, 289–290; Weiss 1986, 779; Williams 1992, 633 ('remarkable emphasis [...] on erotic pursuit'); Schellenberg 2001, 109. For the possible eschatological symbolism, Karouzou 1971; Schellenberg 2001, 106–109.

3 Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1979, 36–41; Arafat 1997, 109–110.

4 Roberts 1978, 179; Schellenberg 2001, 5–32; Bernabé, Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, 299–301.

5 Kenner 1939, especially 89–90; Schellenberg 2001, 44–53; Lefkowitz 2002. For Eos in funerary art, Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1979, 57.

6 Heracleitos, *Quaestiones Homericae* 68; see Buffière 1962, 72–73; Vermeule 1979, 162–165.

7 Athenaeus, *Dipnosophistae* 12.566d. For some interesting literary echoes Plutarch, *Vita Numae* 4, 3 and Artemidorus, *Onirocritica* 1.80. The allusions to Ganymede's abduction in Callimachus are presented by Walsh 1991, 100, n. 65. For eroticism and afterlife, Mace 1996, especially 240–241.

deceased held a privileged position in the afterlife. There are no extant inscriptions or fragments of literature from the Classical period in Athens that speak of the eschatological aspect of the abduction by Eos myth.[8] The deceased were buried at dawn for practical reasons rather than because Eos, the goddess of the dawn was to raise the deceased's soul. Moreover, numerous vessels with scenes of the abduction by Eos were actually wedding gifts. They were considered symbols of romantic love. Their mythological significance elevated the prestige of the ceremony and its participants.

Epigraphic Testimonies

On a tomb shaped like a temple from Acharnai in Attica (early 4th century BC) we find what is probably the earliest extant evidence of this concept, breathing the ethos of heroes, for whom the highest values were recognition among the gods and fame on earth:

> Ares was fond of the ἀγαθοί,[9] praise loved them,
> and youth did not hand them to old age so that they are insulted.
> Glaukiades, who was one of them, kept off his fatherland its enemies
> and went to the all-receiving chamber of Persephone.
>
> (transl. C.C. Tsagalis)[10]

> τὸς ἀγαθὸς ἔστερξεν Ἄρης, ἐφίλησε δ' ἔπαινος
> καὶ γήραι νεότης οὐ παρέδωχ' ὑβρίσαι·
> ὧγ καὶ Γ[λ]αυκιάδης δηίος ἀπὸ πατρίδος ἔργων
> ἦλθ' ἐπὶ πάνδεκτον Φερσεφόνης θάλαμον.

The first funerary epigrams to refer to the abduction of the deceased by a deity probably appeared in the Archaic Period, but the first extant epigrams come from the Classical period. The tradition most likely developed under the influence of consolatory rhetoric, into whose canon entered that notion that death at a young age spares the deceased the sufferings of old age and is evidence that the gods, thus distinguishing the individual, loved this person more than others.[11] Already Homer began formulating the beginnings of such a concept when he said:

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8 Lefkowitz 2002, 335.

9 The prototype would be, probably, Sophocles, fr. 724 *TrGF*: τοὺς εὐγενεῖς γὰρ κἀγαθούς, ὦ παῖ, φιλεῖ Ἄρης ἐναίρειν. See also *AP* 7.160 and 234.

10 *Peek GV*, no. 1637; *CEG*(2), no. 489; Tsagalis 2008, 86–93.

11 Lier 1903–1904, 598–600; Lattimore 1942, 259–260.

> Amphiaraus, driver of armies, whom storming Zeus and Apollo loved intensely, showering him with every form of kindness. But he never reached the threshold of old age, he died at Thebes [...]. (transl. R. Fagles)[12]
>
> λαοσσόον Ἀμφιάρηον, ὃν περὶ κῆρι φίλει Ζεύς τ' αἰγίοχος καὶ Ἀπόλλων παντοίην φιλότητ'· οὐδ' ἵκετο γήραος οὐδόν, ἀλλ' ὄλετ' ἐν Θήβῃσι [...]

At first glance, the theme of abduction by gods might not seem to have anything to do with the fundamental premise of consolatory rhetoric, where intellect, λόγος, was the panacea mending and soothing the troubled and afflicted soul. But such themes were present in consolations using mythological *exempla*.[13] Pseudo-Dionysius of Halicarnassus (2nd century AD?) taught as part of the canon of consolation the statement that deceased young people were kidnapped by deities who loved them. In the past the gods had abducted numerous heroes, such as Ganymede, Tithonus and Achilles, in order to save them from the tribulations of life on earth, for their souls to be saved from the body as from the grave or from a prison, and for them not to become the slaves of wicked masters. The gods wanted to save them from all of this.[14]

On account of its origins, in funerary epigrams the kidnapping of the chosen ones theme usually had a rhetorical, consolatory character. The authors did not attach importance to positive eschatology or even to any other elementary, eschatological interpretations. In an epigram honouring the prematurely deceased Attalos (Gytheion, Laconia, the first half of 1st century BC) we find a statement that nothing good lasts forever. This seems to contradict the consolation preceding it, according to which the deceased died an early death, like all young people loved by the gods. Later the text speaks of the kidnapped deceased being among the immortals (thanks to the Moirai), and finally the epigram states that a daemon has captured and imprisoned the deceased.[15] In another epigram (Rome, 1st–2nd century AD) the attractive fragrance of the body of a deceased 20-year-old—symbolised by beautiful and rare flowers growing from his grave—was evidence that he was loved by the gods (θεοῖς φίλον) and deserved offerings, not mourning (λοιβῆς καὶ θυέων ἄξιον, οὐχὶ γόων). Yet elsewhere in the epigram the deceased was kidnapped by Moira.[16] When an eschatological theme appears, it never

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12 Homer, *Odyssea* 15.245–246, cited in *Axiochos* 368 A; see also 367 C.

13 Kassel 1958, 70; Musurillo 1959; Gessert 2004.

14 Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ars Rhetorica* 6.5.11–23; see Russel, Wilson 1981, 373–376, par. 282.

15 *Peek GV*, no. 2003; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 62. Another good example of such contradictions is *Peek GV*, no. 130.

16 *Kaibel EG*, no. 569; *Peek GV*, no. 1970; *IGUR*(3), no. 1148.

goes beyond simple, banal statements. In an epigram from Neoklaudiopolis (date uncertain, 2nd–3rd century or some other time during the Roman Empire) a female physician called Domnina (?) hurried to be among the immortals of Elysium, leaving behind her husband. No one will say she died; instead she was abducted by the immortals.[17]

Quite frequently, a sentence attributed to the comedy playwright Menander (4th–3rd century BC) was used,[18] according to which those whom the gods loved died young.[19] Its equivalents also appeared on Roman and Christian tombs.[20] This sentence with some sort of promise of salvation in the afterlife appears in an epigram from Mysia (Hadrianuthera, 2nd–3rd century BC); the deceased Meidias (killed by Moira) went to be among the gods and lives with the immortals, because of this idea:

> Full of youthful vigour, I am killed by cruel Moira,
> when I was about to reach Paphia's famous chambers;
> my distraught parents torment themselves in shameful mourning,
> for they can leave their homestead to no son.
> But if you, traveller, wish to know my life:
> I was a stonemason by trade, called Meidias;
> I went to be among the gods, and I live with the immortals:
> all those whom they love die young.[21]

> [πρωθήβην] μ' αἰζηὸν ἀμείλικτο[ς] ἔκτανε Μοίρη,
> ἄρ⟨τ⟩ι κλυτῶν Παφίης ἀψάμενọν θαλάμων·
> πένθεσι δ' οὐχ ὁσίοισι λυγρ⟨οὶ τείροντο γονῆες,
> οὐ γὰρ⟩ ἔ̣χον λίπειν παῖδ' ἕτερον μελάθροις·
> εἰ δὲ θέλ̣εις γνῶναι τὸν ἐμὸν βίον, ὦ παροδεῖτα,
> ἦν μέν μοι τέχνη λαοξόος, οὔνομα Μειδίας,
> ἐσ̣ δὲ θεοὺς ἀνέλυσα καὶ ἀθανάτοισι μέτειμι·
> ὅσσους γὰρ φιλέουσι, νέοι θνήσκουσιν ἅπαντες.

[17] *Peek GV*, no. 1486; *SGO*(2), no. 11/03/02; Samama 2003, no. 324.

[18] ὃν οἱ θεοὶ φιλοῦσιν ἀποθνήσκει νέος, Menander, fr. 111 Koerte, Theirfelder 1957–1959, in Pseudo-Plutarch, *Consolatio ad Apollonium* = *Moralia* 2.119e = fr. 125 Kock 1880–1888, from *Dis exapaton*, see *PCG* 6(2), pp. 102 and 433; see also Allinson 1959, 345.

[19] Herkenrath 1896, 27. Vérilhac 1978(2), 227, gives only three examples: *Peek GV*, no. 2003; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 62 and *Peek GV*, no. 130 and *Kaibel EG*, no. 153 (Kaibel's comment: *celeberrimaque in epitymbiis sententia*); *Peek GV*, no. 1029; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 190; Jaccottet 2003(2), no. 5. Vérilhac did not include the epigrams for the adults; Griessmair 1966, 101–102 lists as such the nos. 130, 961, 1029, 1646, 2003 from *Peek GV*. One should add: *SEG*(19), no. 439 and *IG*(2.2), no. 11587a (θ̣[νήσκειν μὲν νεάρους οὓ]ς φιλέουσι θεοί) and, possibly, *Peek GV*, no. 665; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 165; ibidem(2), 279. For some variations, Lier 1903–1904, 599; Boyancé 1944, 182–183.

[20] Lier 1903–1904, 598–599; Lattimore 1942, 260; Cumont 1949, 328, n. 4.

[21] *Kaibel EG*, no. 340; *Peek GV*, no. 961; *IK*(18), no. 498; *SGO*(2), no. 08/06/09.

In an epigram on a sarcophagus from Rome (3rd century AD) we find mention of the deceased being a favourite of the gods as well as mention of his heroisation:

> To the gods of the underworld.
>
> The lips of the people carry such a tale
> that those die sooner whom the gods love.
> But you only left this life and [your] friends
> when in full blossom you departed from the sunlight
> and are now among the blessed; it cannot be
> that [your] soul should enter Hades.
> You headed for the Isles of the Blessed, leaving behind the concerns
> that bite the hearts of ephemeral mortals.[22]
>
> Θ(εοῖς) [Κ(αταχθονίοις)].
>
> δημώδ[ης ὅδε] ⟨μῦθος⟩ ἐπὶ στομά[τεσσι βέ]⟨βηκεν⟩,
> θᾶσσον ἀπο[θνήσκε]⟨ιν⟩ ⟨οὓς⟩ ⟨φι⟩λέουσι θεοί·
> ⟨ἀλλὰ⟩ ⟨μό⟩[νον τὸ ζῆν] τόδε κάλλιπε⟨ς⟩ ⟨ἠδὲ⟩ ⟨γ⟩' ⟨ἑτ⟩[αίρους
> εὔω]ρος προλιπὼν ⟨ἠελίου⟩ [τὸ φάος]·
> εἶτα σὺ μὲν μ⟨ακάρεσς⟩[ιν ὁμιλεῖς]·οὐδὲ γὰρ εἰκὸς
> ⟨ψυχὴν⟩ [εἰς 'Αίδην μὴ] κατεληλυθέν⟨αι⟩·
> ⟨νήσο⟩[υς εἰς μακά]ρων πωλεύεα[ι ἠδὲ μερίμνας
> κάλλι]πες ὠκυμόρω[ν θυμοβόρους μερόπων].

Such tomb inscriptions suggest that Menander's sentence was sometimes interpreted in a 'positive' way, because the love of gods not only gave freedom from the tribulations of life on earth but also the prospect of immortality.[23] However, their context shows that these were rather variations on the traditional, poetic theme of heroisation.

Peculiar Development: Ganymede in Verse-Inscriptions

According to the myth, the young Trojan prince Ganymede, a mortal, was abducted by Zeus (in person or in the form of an eagle) and taken to Mount Olympus, where he was to serve the gods with nectar, which was the beverage of immortality. He never formally achieved apotheosis, but the way in which he was abducted and what followed clearly indicated that the boy had acquired divine status. It is therefore quite striking that in the

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[22] *Peek GV*, no. 1646; *IGUR*(3), no. 1382. Other examples Engemann 1973, 47, n. 41; Peres 2003, 222–223.
[23] Engemann 1973, 41.

Greek literature and art of the Classical and Hellenistic epochs this tale was told in a decidedly frivolous, even erotic manner.[24] Since time immemorial Ganymede personified the grace and beauty of youth:

> Ganymede radiant as a god,
> and he was the handsomest mortal man on earth—
> and so the immortals, awestruck by his beauty,
> snatched him away to bear the cup of Zeus
> and pour out wine for all the deathless gods. (transl. R. Fagles)[25]

> [...] ἀντίθεος Γανυμήδης,
> ὃς δὴ κάλλιστος γένετο θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων·
> τὸν καὶ ἀνηρείψαντο θεοὶ Διὶ οἰνοχοεύειν
> κάλλεος εἵνεκα οἷο ἵν' ἀθανάτοισι μετείη.

In the Greco-Roman period Ganymede underwent an interesting evolution. He started appearing in funerary epigrams and art as a symbol of premature death. We find what is most likely a subtle allusion to Ganymede in an epigram engraved on a marble base (stele, statue or column?) from Smyrna (modern Izmir) in Asia Minor from 2nd–3rd century AD:

> The provider of sleep, night, fell on the light of my life,
> sweet sleep freed my body from painful afflictions,
> on Moira's instructions, bringing me the gift of forgetfulness.[26]
> Yet from my chest, like a gust of wind, my soul rushed to the Ether
> with speed light wings lifted it through the dense clouds.
> I fortunately reached the house of the gods, where I am now,
> in the celestial palace I look at the light of the morning star.[27]
> Zeus and the immortal gods honoured me, by the words of Hermes [?],
> who led me by the hand, in the heavens,[28]
> and soon bowed before me, thus greatly honouring me,
> that I should live in the starry sky, among the blessed,
> as [their] friend seated on the golden throne.
> They kindly glance at me as by the tripods and tables I feast on ambrosia,
> and smiles lift the cheeks of those immortal heads
> when a libation of nectar for the blessed ones I pour.[29]

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24 See e.g. Phillips 1960; Clarke 1991; Gregg 2000; Provencal 2005.

25 Homer, *Illias* 20.232–235.

26 Allusion to the waters of Lethe.

27 Eos.

28 See the Greek vase with Hermes leading Ganymede, Arafat 1990, 75; Beazley 1963, no. 530.26. See also Sichtermann 1953, 26–27.

29 *Kaibel EG*, no. 312; *Peek GV*, no. 1765; *IK* (23.1), no. 539; *SGO* (1), no. 05/01/64; Bernabé 2009, 122–123.

νὺξ μὲν ἐμὸν κατέχει ζωῆς φάος ὑπνοδοτείρη,
ἀλγεινῶν λύσασα νόσων δέμας ἡδέϊ ὕπνωι,
λήθης δῶρα φέρουσ' ἐπ' ἐμοὶ προστ⟨άγ⟩μασι Μοίρης·
ψυχὴ δ' ἐ⟨κ⟩ κραδίης δράμ' ἐς αἴθερον εἴκελος αὔρηι
κοῦφον ἐπαιωροῦσα δρόμω⟨ι⟩ πτερὸν ἠέρι πολλῶι,
καί με θεῶν μακάρων κατέχει δόμος ἆσσον ἰόντα,
οὐρανίοις τε δόμοισι βλέπω φάος Ἠριγενείης.
τειμὴ δ' ἐκ Διός ἐστι σὺν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι
Ἑρμείαο λόγοις· ὅς μ' οὐρανὸν ἤγαγε χειρῶν
αὐτίκα τειμήσας καί μοι κλέος ἐσθλὸν ἔδωκεν
οἰκεῖν ἐν μακάρεσσι κατ' οὐρανὸν ἀστερόεντα,
χρυσείοισι θρόνοισι παρήμενον ἐς φιλότητα,
καί με παρὰ τριπόδεσσι καὶ ἀμβροσίῃσι τραπέζαι[ς]
ἡδόμενον κατὰ δαῖτα θεοὶ φίλον εἰσορόωσιν,
κρατὸς ἀπ' ἀθανάτοιο πα{τ}ρη⟨ῖ⟩σι μειδιόωντες
[νέκταρ ὅτ' ἐν] προχοαῖσιν ἐπισπένδω μακάρεσσι.

The text was discovered in 1647 and is probably complete. The names of the deceased and his parents were probably inscribed on the part of the tomb that had disappeared. This poem, which is expertly written but unmistakably expressing genuine belief in salvation after death, inadvertently mentions the sufferings of the deceased only in the first verses, which concern the fate of his body. Yet next attention is concentrated on the warm welcome among the immortals, where the deceased feels somewhat uneasy, surprised by the turn of events, but then again not alien on account of how he is greeted, as if he were an old and respected friend. He feels relieved that the journey is over, and the rest of his concern is dispersed by the warm and loving smiles of the gods. They burst out laughing, because even after death the deceased continues to perform the pious acts as he did during his lifetime and which are now somewhat out of place. They have just sat down to a lavish banquet and therefore do not need a few drops of nectar.[30] The happy afterlife was a never-ending, joyous feast in which the deceased participated like a new Ganymede. In this sense, the atmosphere and articulation of the epigram is unequivocal; the question remains as to whether the deceased was directly identified with Ganymede. A.-M. Vérilhac is sceptical.[31] According to the scholar we are dealing here with the heroisation of the deceased and his entry to the divine stars. She sees a symbolic, Neoplatonic interpretation of the banquet in the afterlife, because in her opinion such a banquet simply indicates happiness of the soul. Nonetheless,

30 See the notable similarity to Homer, *Illias* 1.597–599; for the smile of gods, Tanner 2001, 264.

31 Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 199 and ibidem(2), 306, 317–321, 364, 371, 384–385.

it seems that in this epigram the deceased performs the role of Ganymede, and it is he who is the author's protagonist.[32]

Such doubts one cannot have with regard to an inscription from Aizanoi in Phrygia, dated 247/248 AD. It states that the young, deceased Antoneinos was abducted by Zeus:

> Stop, traveller who comes here, stop, do not pass regardless;
> I am Antoneinos, I rest mute beneath this tombstone [...]
> Zeus [abducted me], the new Phrygian Ganymede [...]
> To Karpion, my younger brother.
>
> In the year 278.[33]
>
> Μεῖνόν μοι π[αράγων], μ[εῖ-]νον, ξένε· μή με παρέλθῃς·
> Ἀντωνῖνος ἐγὼ, κεῖμαι δ' ὑπὸ τύμβον ἄναυδος [...]
> Ζεύς με νέον Φρύγιον Γανυμήδην [...]
> Καρπίωνι νέῳ [συ]νομαίμῳ.
>
> ἔτους σοη´

In this particular case we are able to accurately explain the reason for the words in the inscription. Ganymede was considered to be the son of one of the Phrygian kings and so his cult was popular throughout that land. This would especially seem to be the case in Aizanoi, where Ganymede was considered to be the son of the mythical Azen/Azan, the city's founder and first king.[34] Not by chance from Aizanoi there is another tomb and epigram concerning the prematurely deceased 'hero' Apellas. A relief on the tomb shows an eagle with outstretched wings, alluding to the abduction of Ganymede by Zeus.[35]

In Rome there is also a Latin epitaph for a small boy whose parents speak of the deceased being abducted by Zeus straight up to heaven, and they actually call their son 'our Ganymede':

> Now, because we were denied joy from our Ganymede, abducted by the bird,
> I would like at least for heavenly destiny to be fulfilled, so that we may soon arrive
> in the same place, to look after our prematurely deceased [child].[36]

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32 Engemann 1973, 40–41, n. 6; Wrede 1981, 50–51, Le Bris 2001, 36, 101–103, 107–110.

33 *Kaibel EG*, no. 380; *Peek GV*, no. 1318; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 198; *SGO*(3), no. 16/23/06.

34 See the references in Strubbe 1984–1986, 261, n. 41; Merkelbach 1997; *EBGR* 1997, no. 264 and ibidem 1998, no. 429; *SGO*(3), no. 16/01/01. For the mythological genealogies of Asia Minor cities, Weiss 1984; Scheer 1993; Lindner 1994, especially 67–79.

35 *Kaibel EG*, no. 374; *Peek GV*, no. 667; *SGO*(3), no. 16/23/07.

36 *CIL*(6), no. 35769; *CLE*(2), no. 1994.

Nunc quia non licuit frunisci nostrum ave raptum Ganymeden,
velim quidem facerent caelestia fa[*ta ut eode*[*m*]
iremus properes ad nostrum immaturu[*m*] *tuendum.*

Remaining known epigrams only make more or less veiled allusions to Ganymede. Therefore we have very few items of evidence, but again we are probably dealing with the actual state of the tradition of presenting the deceased as the abducted favourites of Zeus as it was at the time. When the aforementioned Pseudo-Dionysius of Halicarnassus listed the abducted favourites of the gods with whom the deceased were identified, first among them was Ganymede. Hence he considered the Ganymede myth to be the most important and popular example. Similarly, in a commentary to the *Iliad* by Eustathius (12th century AD) the abduction of Ganymede is taken to symbolise the premature death of a child, like other myths of this sort—by which the author probably had in mind the abductions of Persephone and Hylas.[37] The popularity of this myth is also evident in the poems of Lucillius, a Greek epigrammatist in Nero's day who wrote over a hundred satirical epigrams, contained primarily in Book 11 of the *Greek Anthology*. One such epigram characterises the abducted (deceased?) as Ganymede. While at play, a mosquito abducts a small girl called Erotion, who asks what will happen to her and expresses astonishment that it is Zeus who desires her. The object of the joke is the megalomania of the abducted girl, who thinks she is Ganymede. The mosquito she takes to be the eagle Zeus, who has come to apotheosise her.[38]

Ganymede in Funerary Art

One may assume that the tradition of placing Ganymede in a funerary context had already started in the Classical period. There are extant vases depicting Ganymede from graves in southern Italy.[39] An interesting example

[37] Eustathius, *Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem* 4.396.5, see Boyancé 1952a, 286. Regarding Ganymede, see Sichtermann 1953; Schauenburg 1969; Engemann 1973, 40–59; Sichtermann, Koch 1975, no. 20; Vermeule 1979, 247, n. 29; Kempter 1980; Sichtermann 1988; Woodford 2003, 119–122. For the epigrammatic poetry, Tarán 1979, 7–51; Vérilhac 1978(2), 317–321.

[38] *AP* 11.88: 'A gnat carried off little Erotion as she was playing. "What is going to happen to me?" she said, "Dost thou want me, father Zeus?"' transl. W.R. Paton (Τὴν μικρὴν παίζουσαν Ἐρώτιον ἥρπασε κώνωψ· ἡ δὲ "Τί," φησί, "πάθω; Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἦ μ' ἐθέλεις;"). See Robert 1967b, 285–286; Keydell 1968, 142 and n. 1; Rozema 1974; Sànchez Ortiz de Landaluce 2006, 235–241. See also Robert 1967b, 264–265; Lausberg 1982, p. 411.

[39] Sichtermann 1953, 65–66; Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1979.

appears on a fragment of a vessel from the grave of a boy in Kerameikos. It is a painting by the Penthesilea Painter from c. 460–450 BC.[40] One side depicts Ganymede, the other probably presents Zeus. The purpose was to emphasise that the deceased was young and beautiful, like Ganymede. During his life he was loved and admired, whereas after death he became a favourite of the gods. We may therefore assume that prematurely deceased boys were in this way compared to Ganymede. In most cases this comparison did not carry any promise of salvation in the afterlife. On the contrary, they accentuated the tragic loss of physical virtues and the injustice of death. Nevertheless, the increased use of this theme on tombs in the time of the Roman Empire is thought-provoking. There is a large number of presentations of Ganymede on tombs. Probably the best known is a relief on a funeral column of the Secundini family in Igel (Germany, not far from Luxemburg, 2nd–3rd century AD; it also depicts the abduction of Hylas as well as the apotheosis of Hercules).[41] One of the most interesting is a tomb from Sempeter in Slovenia (Noricum, 2nd century AD) which depicts the abductions of Ganymede and Europe (see fig. 4). Ganymede embraces the eagle and looks into his eyes.[42] From Grado in north-eastern Italy there is a funerary stele bearing an epitaph and a relief with a specific rendering of Ganymede being abducted by an eagle (see fig. 5).[43] The image has the characteristics of a portrait and therefore it suggests an identification of the deceased with Ganymede. The figure is picking flowers, his body half immersed in them. This stylisation differs from the canon, which presents Ganymede either as a shepherd or a hunter. The flowers are not used here as a mere ornament, nor do they symbolise carefree childhood. Instead they seem to be a deliberate stylisation of the abduction of Persephone by Hades.[44]

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40 Beazley 1963, no. 890.176; Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1979, 10; Arafat 1990, 68 and no. 3.46. For the symbolism of the abduction of Ganymede, Bruneau 1962; Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1979; Arafat 1990, 65–76, 189–191 (in the catalogue). In funerary art Brandenburg 1968; Koch, Sichtermann 1982, 146–147.

41 Strong 1915, 222–232; Dragendorf, Krüger 1924; Ling 1979, 807, no. 29; Oakley 1990.

42 Toynbee 1971, 173; Kastelic 1997; Sandrock 2003, no. 34.

43 Maionica 1898, no. 29; Jucker 1961(1), 140–141; Wrede 1981, 126 and no. 117 in the catalogue. Similar relief from Cataio in Italy, Thiersch, et al. 1826, 310; Jahn 1847, 18–19. For the image of Ganymede on Roman sarcophagi, Schauenburg 1972; Turcan 1974.

44 Engemann 1972; Colpe, et al. 1996, 304–307; Black 1986. For the symbolism of meadows, Deacy 1997, 45, 59, notes 10 and 11.

Figure 4. Abduction of Ganymede on a 2nd century AD tomb from Sempeter in Slovenia/Noricum.

Figure 5. Abduction of the deceased as Ganymede on a funerary relief from Grado in Italy, imperial.

Spirituality or Carnality of the Myth, or Both

The reasons why the Ganymede abduction myth should become popular in funerary epigrams and on tombs are not very clear. The difficulty stems from the lack of any eschatological or soteriological references to this myth in ancient literary sources. We are therefore forced to analyse solely non-literary sources, above all funerary epigrams as well as images of Ganymede on tomb vases, reliefs and paintings. Was the myth's popularity due to its soteriological significance? Was it considered equivalent to the deceased's heroisation or apotheosis? The opinions of scholars are divided. Some believe that the myth's 'secular' context, derived primarily

from literature and decorative art, by no means precludes Ganymede's religious significance. In their opinion Ganymede's persona underwent a fundamental evolution. The most important representative of this view was F. Cumont, who pointed to the fact that in Greco-Roman times Olympus became increasingly identified with the heavens; and therefore the abduction of Ganymede increasingly came to mean his ascension into heaven.[45] It is not by chance that in this epoch astrologists and the authors of catasterisms associated Ganymede with a concrete zodiac sign, Aquarius (ὑδροχόος). After all, Ganymede's traditional attribute was a jug, out of which he poured a liquid as cup-bearer to the gods.[46] According to Cumont, Ganymede's catasterism was probably associated with religious, allegorical interpretation of the myth and, in particular, concepts of astral immortality. Cumont found confirmation for his theory in an interesting presentation of Ganymede on the underground ceiling of the Porta Maggiore 'basilica' in Rome (see fig. 6). The youth appears in the middle of the nave (i.e. in the very centre, amidst other depictions associated with heroisation and ascension to heaven) in the scene where he is abducted, but not by an eagle. Instead his captor is a winged genius, most likely Eros. In one hand the youth holds a torch, while with the other hand he tilts a vessel.[47] Cumont assumed that here Ganymede was entering the heavens to be among the stars, in accordance with the Pythagorean idea of the soul entering the Ether.[48] Other indications of a religious interpretation of Ganymede are provided by the widespread use of eagle symbolism in the funerary context, as I have already mentioned in reference to the Eutychos epigram from Albanum. Since the 4th century BC the eagle frequently symbolised Zeus abducting Ganymede. On tombs and sarcophagi there are quite a few extant presentations of Ganymede being carried by the talons or on the back of an eagle.[49]

Thus, following Cumont's arguments, many scholars have decided that, with time, the perception of Ganymede underwent a fundamental evolution to become an eschatological symbol. This sophisticated idea was, after all, paralleled by the ritual apotheosis of Roman emperors; for them a funeral pyre was ignited and from its top an eagle would carry their deified soul up

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45 Contra Sichtermann 1953, 54, 65, 115, n. 245; 121, n. 319.

46 Kempter 1980, 8; Merkelbach 1997; Sànchez Ortiz de Landaluce 2006, 225.

47 Engemann 1973, 17, n. 21. See also Bagnani 1919, 82–83 and Engemann 1972.

48 Strong, Joliffe 1924; Eisler 1925, 321–322; Carcopino 1943, 111–112, 138; Boyancé 1952a, 287–289; Sichtermann 1953, 121, n. 320; Aurigemma 1954; Engemann 1973, 17–18.

49 Cumont 1917, especially 85–86, 89–90; Geyer 1967, 16–23; Peres 2003, 191.

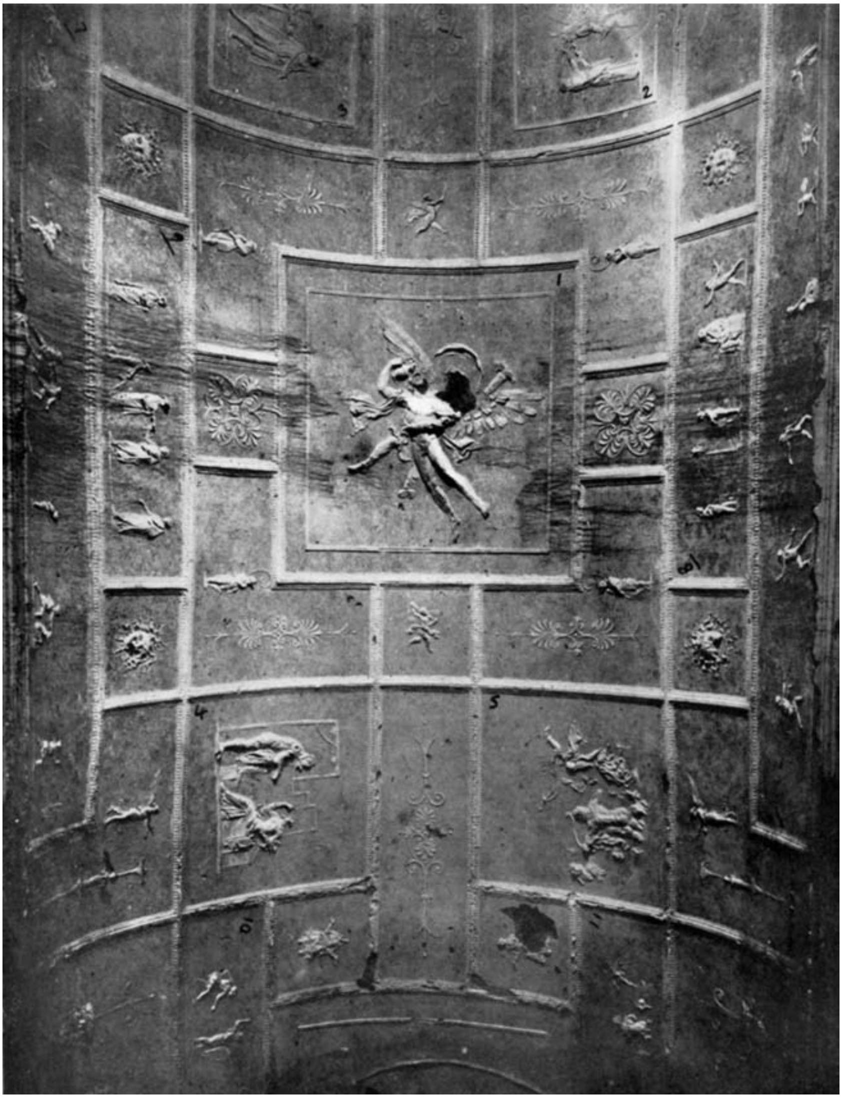

Figure 6. Abduction of Ganymede on the stucco ceiling of the underground Porta Maggiore 'basilica' in Rome, 3rd century AD.

to heaven.[50] According to this interpretation, Ganymede, despite the erotic ambiguity of the myth, came to symbolise the soul entering the heavens, in among the stars. This was also indicated by the allegorical, Pythagorean and zodiacal interpretations of Ganymede, with the eagle symbolising his apotheosis, as well as by the role he played in funerary art. Adherents of this theory point out that it is not by chance that the image of this youth occupied such a privileged place on certain monuments: crowning the column in Igel, the stele in Grado and the nave in the Porta Maggiore 'basilica' in Rome.[51] According to them it resulted from the fact that Ganymede had come to symbolise heroisation, apotheosis and hope in being reborn after death.

Yet the message from the sources at our disposal, i.e. funerary inscriptions and reliefs, is in this respect equivocal. Barely two epigrams explicitly link the deceased with Ganymede, and these two associations do not actually provide hope of salvation in the afterlife. In the epigram from Aizanoi we are dealing with an allusion to local mythology.[52] The epigram from Rome (addressed to *nostrum ave raptum Ganymeden*) primarily deals with physical beauty and the loss of life in the flower of youth. Mention of Ganymede is preceded by references to Cupid and Narcissus.[53] One may also note, as R. Turcan stressed, a certain anxiety expressed by the purchasers of the tomb, the parents, who wanted to join their child to look after it (*ad nostrum immaturum tuendum*). Such phrases contradict the idea of the deceased's apotheosis and indicate that the parents compared their children to Ganymede's beauty without any hope of their ascension to Olympus.[54] As H. Sichtermann has pointed out, one may also question other supposed examples of Ganymede representing the prospect of life after death in epigrams. In the aforementioned epigram from Smyrna the deceased, who ascended to Olympus and joined a banquet of the gods, reminds us of Ganymede, yet it is Hermes, and not an eagle, who leads the deceased boy to the afterlife.[55] Moreover, we cannot be certain that

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50 Herodian, *De imperio post Marcum historiarum libri octo* 4.2.11.

51 The interpretation of Ganymede as a symbol of astral immortality, promoted by Cumont 1942, 97–99 and Turcan 1966, 563, 611, 613, has found many followers, applying it to specific testimonies, e.g. Herbig 1949, 2; van Buchem 1959, 48–49; Renard 1966; Black 1986, 152; van Meurs 2009, 36–38.

52 *Kaibel EG*, no. 380; *Peek GV*, no. 1318; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 198; *SGO*(3), no. 16/23/06.

53 *CLE*(2), no. 1994. See Sichtermann 1992, 59–69.

54 Turcan 1999, 14.

55 *Kaibel EG*, no. 312; *Peek GV*, no. 1765; *IK*(23.1), no. 539; *SGO*(1), no. 05/01/64; Bernabé 2009, 122–123.

here the deceased is actually a cupbearer to the gods. The text is in this respect ambiguous.[56] The epigram from Albanum, mentioned in reference to catasterism, speaks of a deceased boy called Eutychos being abducted by Zeus and thus ascending to the heavens.[57] Yet stating the deceased was kidnapped by an eagle (which is presented in an accompanying relief) did not necessarily mean the deceased was identified as Ganymede. The eagle simply symbolised apotheosis, regardless of the Ganymede myth.[58]

One may also question applying the eschatological interpretation of the Ganymede myth to the analysis of funerary reliefs. J. Scheid was decidedly critical of eschatological interpretations in reference to the column in Igel. Its individual themes cannot be treated quite separately from one another; the iconography needs to be regarded as a whole. As such it expressed the violent and premature demise of family members and recorded their achievements in this world for eternal glory.[59] Contrary to Cumont's conclusions, R. Turcan argues that the Ganymede abduction scene in the Porta Maggiore 'basilica' had exactly the same purpose as those appearing on sarcophagi and was simply an allegory of premature death. The 'basilica' itself should probably be considered more as funerary monument.[60] There are no known presentations of deceased 'Ganymedes' ascending to heaven. The known abduction of Ganymede scenes could depict not so much a raising up to the heavens as an 'ordinary' kidnapping by Zeus. J. Engemann asked the question: if this abduction symbolised being taken to a happy place in the afterlife or the salvation of the soul, why then was Ganymede depicted putting up resistance or looking so terrified?[61]

The eschatological approach, which presents Ganymede's transformation from a beautiful ephebe and the protagonist of an equivocal myth to the hero of a lofty allegory, one whose fate was supposed to symbolise the

56 Peek 1960, 391: 'wenn ich beim Trankopfer den Seligen mit Nektar die Spende darbringe'.

57 *Peek GV*, no. 861. See Engemann 1972, 1040–1041; Engemann 1973, 38–39, n. 202; 40–41, n. 6 and Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 201; ibidem(2), 328–330, 332, 380–381.

58 See the interesting testimony from Athens, *Kaibel EG*, no. 134; *Peek GV*, no. 392; von Moock 1998, no. 275 and pl. 42 b, for which Brandenburg 1967, 234–235, n. 119; Geyer 1967, 19; Wrede 1981, 51; *ThesCRA*(2), 194 (see fig. 7).

59 Scheid 2003.

60 Turcan 1966, 58. See also Boyancé 1952a; Mielsch 1975, 29, who is not precise in his claim that there are no extant Roman funerary basilicas, see Seston, Perrat 1947.

61 A similar debate regarding the scenes of Ganymede feeding eagle on sarcophagi, Herbig 1949, 5; Engemann 1972.

Figure 7. Funerary statue of an elderly deceased from Athens, 2nd century AD.

soul ascending to heaven, is above all astonishing.[62] Whichever way we look at it, in the myth Zeus' motive for kidnapping the boy was nothing other than pederasty. Those favouring the transformation of Ganymede's character appear to think there is no place for such themes in the funerary or eschatological context. They seem unable to accept that what for them symbolises the soul's ascension to heaven was also an unmistakeable act of pederasty. It is for them indeed astounding that distraught parents should compare their prematurely deceased son with the victim of such an offence and use it to emphasise happiness after death or that the mythical Ganymede, distinguished on account of his erotic virtues and 'achievements' (i.e. holding the official function of cupbearer), should symbolise the immortality of the human soul.[63] This seems to be a more or less conscious sublimation of Ganymede. The most extreme example of this attitude is a curious study by P.C. Mayo.[64] According to Mayo, with the exception of writers of comedies or 'low' literature, none of the 'serious' authors referred to Ganymede as Zeus' lover nor did they associate him with *amor carnalis*. In her opinion, in ancient times the metaphysical, philosophical, eschatological and soteriological interpretation of Ganymede prevailed, and as evidence of this she points to Greco-Roman tombs and the relief from Porta Maggiore. Such interpretations of the Ganymede myth are far from new. Already in antiquity there were attempts to reformulate, deepen and whitewash a naïve tale about Zeus favouring a παῖς καλὸς. The most important proponents of this approach included Plato and Xenophon, who tried to diminish the erotic and sensual aspect of the myth by stating that Ganymede (like Heracles, Castor and Pollux) ascended to Olympus on account of his soul, not his body, and the happiness he experienced there stemmed from his intellect, not his body.[65] Yet Homer clearly states that Ganymede was abducted on account of his beauty and that he served the gods as a cupbearer. According to Pindar, it was Ganymede's beauty that saved him from death.[66] Therefore there was one Ganymede and one myth, not two, a sensual and frivolous Ganymede, and another sublime and ethereal Ganymede. The pederastic aspect of the myth cannot be ignored because the 'abduction' was a euphemism for an amorous conquest. On the other hand, the abduction of Ganymede cannot

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62 Sichtermann 1953, 121, n. 319.

63 Cumont 1942, 97.

64 Mayo 1967. A different interpretation by Kempter 1980, 6–7.

65 Xenophon, *Symposium* 8.29–30; Aristonicus of Alexandria, *De signis Iliadis* 20.234; Olimpiodorus, *In Platonis Gorgiam commentaria* 40.3; for the mythographic traditions, Kempter 1980, 12.

66 Homer, *Illias* 20.235; Pindar, *Olympia* 10.104–105.

be solely about pederastic desires because that would make no sense of the boy being taken to Olympus—after all, deities, in various guises, frequently made amorous conquests on earth.[67] Sensuality and eroticism are very much part of the Ganymede abduction myth, to the same extent as his happiness in the afterlife. This duality was, by way of digression, very well expressed in a satirical scene known to us from southern Italy in the 4th century BC. A number of intact copies and copy fragments of a Sotades vase present a negro being captured by a crocodile.[68] Extant (likely votive) fragments of this vase from the temple of Artemis on Thasos include an inscription with the words: ὁ κροκόδιλος ἐρασθ[είς]—'the infatuated crocodile.' This is most likely the parody of a deity who, disguised as an animal, abducts a youth to make him immortal. In other words, this was a parody of the Ganymede myth. As we know, crocodiles were considered sacred in ancient Egypt; there were also numerous tales of the apotheosis of people who were taken by crocodiles.[69]

In short, if we assume that on tombstones the Ganymede abduction myth symbolised the immortality of the human soul, we have to explain why this myth, concerning a boy of carnal beauty subjugated by the lust of an older male, was used instead of other myths devoid of such double meaning and thus better suited for funerary symbolism?

Zeus, His Thunderbolt, and the Dead

This question can be answered if we presume that we are dealing with variations on a broader theme. For in other epigrams without any clear references to the Ganymede myth we indeed find mention of Zeus taking or abducting the deceased to his various homes. An epigram from Lychnidos (Spomenik) in Macedonia (2nd century AD) states that Zeus took the deceased Aptyris to Elysium:

> Beloved daughter, for [your] noble virtue
> the lord and master himself, the son of Kronos, led you to Elysium […][70]
>
> ἀντί σε κυδαλίμας ἀρετᾶς, πολυήρατε κούρα,
> ἦξεν εἰς ἠλύσιον αὐτὸς ἄναξ Κρονίδης […]

[67] Kempter 1980, 6.
[68] See e.g. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rhyton_crocodile_BM_F417.jpg.
[69] Salviat 1967 and Hoffmann 1997, 21.
[70] *Kaibel EG*, no. 511; *Peek GV*, no. 1943; *IG*(10.2.2), no. 382.

In a similar epigram from Vetissos in Phrygia, Zeus abducted Agathon:

> Markos dedicated his children to the great god Zeus,
> [and] an expensive altar, commemorating Agathon;
> Zeus, having fallen in love with him, snatched him away so that he stays in air.
> Markos for his [children] [...]
> (translation with the revisions suggested by A. Chaniotis, per. litt.)[71]

> Ζηνὶ θεῷ μεγάλω Μᾶρκος παῖδας ἀνέθηκεν
> [β]ωμὸν τειμήεντα με[μ]νημένος εἰς Ἀγάθωνα
> ἠπεὶ Ζεὺς ἐφίλησε [καὶ] ἥρπασεν ἀέρι μεῖνα[ι].
> [Μᾶρκος] ἰ̣δ̣ί̣ους [...]

It is also possible (according to one interpretation) that an epigram on an altar from Nikaia in Bithynia dedicated by parents to their deceased son, Perseus, refers to his abduction by Zeus:

> Epikrates with his wife, Apphe, with prayers and sacred rites
> set up this altar for their child, Perseus, who appeared next to Zeus.
> (translation with the revisions by A. Chaniotis, per. litt.)[72]

> [Ἐ]πικράτης σ[ὺν γα]μετῇ Ἀπφῇ τὸν βωμὸν ἀνέστησαν τέκνῳ Περσῖ
> εὐχαῖς καὶ τελεταῖς ὁσίαις παρὰ Ζηνὶ φανέντα.

To understand the meaning of such tombs one has to take into account that belief in such kidnappings did not only stem from ancient myths but also from natural phenomena. In an epigram from Thyatira the deceased daughter comforts her mother that it was Zeus, the master of thunderbolts residing in the Ether, who burnt her body and kidnapped her soul to the starry heavens:

> Zeus himself, son of Kronos, reigning from high above,
> residing in the Ether, burned [my] body in fire and took the life from [my] chest.
> [But] I was not mortal; I immediately appeared before [my] venerable mother
> and in the darkest night uttered these words unto her:
> "Mother Melitine, cast aside your laments, cease weeping,
> and remember [my] soul; with joy casting thunderbolts,
> Zeus made her immortal, and eternally young;
> taking her up to the starry sky."[73]

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71 *MAMA*(7), no. 359; *SGO*(3), no. 16/46/01.

72 *EBGR* 2001, no. 120, on p. 227 (different interpretation); *SEG*(51), no. 1709 bis; *SGO*(2), no. 09/05/40; Schuddeboom 2009, 207, no. 15.

73 *Kaibel EG*, no. 320; *Peek GV*, no. 1993; *TAM*(5.2), no. 1108; *SGO*(1), no. 04/05/07.

[α]ὐτό⟨ς⟩ Ζεὺς Κρονίδης [ὑ]⟨ψ⟩ίζυγος αἰθέρι ναίων
[ς]ῶμα πυρὶ φ⟨λ⟩έ⟨ξ⟩ας στέρνων ἐξείλετο θυμόν·
οὐκ ἤμ [ην] βροτός· [ἰ]θὺ ⟨π⟩αρέσṭ[ην] [μ]ητέρι σεμνῇ
νυκτὶ μελαινοτάτῃ ἑρμηνε[ύ]ουσα τάδ' οὕτως·
Μῆτε[ρ] Μελιτίνη, θρῆνον λίπε, παῦε γόọιο,
ψυχῆς μνης[α]μένη, ἥν μοι Ζεὺς τε⟨ρ⟩πικ[έρ]αυνος
τεύξας ἀθάνατον καὶ ἀ⟨γ⟩ήραον ἤματα [π]άντα
ἁρπάξας ἐκόμι[ς] [σ'] εἰς οὐρανὸν ἀστερό[εν]τα{ς}.

The text most likely refers to the death of a woman struck by lightning. R. Merkelbach even supposed that 'paranormal' phenomena were involved. In his opinion, the daughter appeared before her mother at the moment of death. The epigram expressed the idea (though not explicitly) that it was Zeus' fire which purified the daughter, so that her soul was completely separated from her body. This seems to be implied in the second verse, where the heart is taken to mean the soul (στέρνων ἐξείλετο θυμόν). The deceased, freed from earthly ties, could thus rise to heaven.[74]

In an epigram from Dorylaion in Anatolia (in the Roman period) a certain Nedymos was also killed by lighting. But in this case his body was as a result considered sacred:

Pass by with pious tongue, not calling me a grave;
I am the site of worship of heavenly lightning and fire;
the ligh-bearing torch has purified/consecrated here the body of Nedymos
and has left an undying memory of his life. (transl. A. Chaniotis)[75]

Εὔφημος γλώσσῃ παραμείβεο, μὴ τάφον εἴπῃς
αἰθερίας. βροντῆς καὶ πυρός εἰμι σέβας
Νηδύμου ἔνθα δέμας σελαεὶς ἡγνίσσατο πυρσὸς
ἀθάνατον μνήμην λειψάμενος βιότου.

Another epigram from Dorylaion in the Roman Empire period states that Zeus summoned the deceased from the dead. It calls on the reader to worship the monument of the deceased Ploution not as a grave, but as an act of Zeus' mercy:

Zeus, the highest among the immortals, has called the mortal man from the dead,
ordering not to honour the monument of Ploution as a grave,
but to honour the merciful conduct of Zeus in this very site.
(transl. A. Chaniotis)[76]

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[74] Le Bris 2001, 86–87, 105–106. For οὐρανὸς ἀστερόεις, A. Chaniotis, *EBGR* 1989, no. 115, on p. 338.
[75] *SGO*(3), no. 16/34/32.
[76] *SGO*(3), no. 16/34/33; *SEG*(51), no. 1769; *EBGR* 2001, no. 121, on p. 228.

> Ὁ βροτὸ[ν] ἐκ φθιμένων καλέσας μακάρων ὕπατος Ζεύς,
> Πλουτίωνος δὲ τὸ σῆμα κελήσατο μηκέτι τύνβον
> θρησκεύειν αὐτῷ δὲ τόπῳ Διὸς εἴλοα πονπήν.

R. Merkelbach suggests this is visible evidence of the idea that Zeus rewarded dignified and virtuous conduct in life by taking the deceased to heaven. A. Chaniotis has a somewhat different, quite literal understanding as to why Ploution was struck by lightning in that specific place and why it was dedicated to Zeus Kataibates. Klerachos mentions a similar event. Apparently lightning had killed a whole group of men in Taranto who were buried outside their homes. Instead of lamentations and libations for the deceased, offerings were laid in honour of Zeus Kataibates.[77] There was a widespread belief that when people were killed by lightning it meant that they were abducted by Zeus. The place where Zeus appeared as lightning was called ἐνηλύσια or ἠλύσια, which already in antiquity lexicographers associated with Elysium.[78] The victims of lightning were considered sacred, 'touched' by a god (διόβλητοι, literally meaning 'struck,' 'touched by Zeus').[79] People thus chosen were worshiped as heroes or gods.[80] They were believed to have supernatural qualities. Their bodies did not decompose; dogs and birds would not touch them. They were rarely buried or cremated, but instead their bodies were left where the lightning had killed them, within a specially constructed enclosure.[81] If they were buried, it would be in a place isolated from other graves.[82] Death caused by lightning, like being abducted up to heaven or Mount Olympus, meant that the deceased was a favourite of the gods, a chosen one treated by the deities with special grace.

From our perspective, the following points emerge. There are some associations to be made between the motif of death by Zeus' lightning and the abduction of Ganymede. First, both cases concern a sudden, miraculous ascension of the deceased to be among the gods. Second, in ancient Greek literature and iconography lightning was frequently presented as being able

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77 Klearchos (fr. 48) apud Athenaeus, *Dipnosophistae* 12.522ef, see Rohde 1925, 193, n. 68.

78 Burkert 1961; Burkert 1985, 198; Nagy 1979, 190; Garland 1985, 99–100; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 49–52. Contra Burkert's theory Vermeule 1979, 229, n. 58; Sourvinou-Inwood 1981a, 36, n. 16; Beekes 1998, 19–23; Drew Griffith 2001, 213–214; Bremmer 2002, 137, n. 47; Kraus 2003, 149–151.

79 The difference between death from lightning and divine abduction was fluid, compare Euripides, *Ion* 292; Hyginus, *Fabulae* 46.

80 Rohde 1925, 581–582 ('Appendix I'); Nilsson 1955–1961(1), 71–73; Nagy 1979, 203; Bremmer 1983, 105–108; Mendelsohn 1991–1992.

81 Plutarch, *Quaestiones convivales* = *Moralia* 8.665c.

82 Plinius, *Naturalis Historia* 2.145; Artemidorus, *Onirocritica* 2.9.

to fly, for which purpose it had wings.[83] Thus its symbol as well as its carrier was an eagle, the sacred bird of Zeus.[84] Zeus in the Ganymede myth appears as an eagle. Already Sophocles speaks of Zeus as winged lightning (Διὸς πτερωτὸς ἥδε μ' αὐτίκ' ἄξεται βροντή), taking the deceased to Hades.[85] The author of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homiliae* and *Recognitiones* (2nd century AD) recounts an interesting legend concerning Zoroaster: the loving god struck him with lightning to take possession of his soul. In a similar way the custom spread for those struck by lightning to be worshipped as ones loved by the gods as well as to have temples and statues erected in their honour.[86] There was even an openly homosexual interpretation of Zeus' lightning; it was associated with the god's phallus and homosexual relations. Festus informs us in his Latin dictionary (2nd century AD) that the 2nd century BC consul and censor Q. Fabius Maximus, who had been struck by lightning in the buttocks (or perhaps it was just a birthmark), had acquired the nickname 'Chick of Jove' (*pullus Iovis*), meaning plaything or favourite, because he was considered to have been raped by a god.[87] One may therefore assume that there was a conceivable link between death by lightning and the abduction of Ganymede by Zeus.[88]

One feels also obliged to agree with C. Sourvinou-Inwood's suggestion that the prospect of eternal life after being killed by lightning must have been particularly convincing among those where the cremation of the dead was widely practiced. The divine fire of lightning, like the funeral pyre, cleansed the soul of its corporal shell and allowed it to rise to the regions where the immortals resided.[89] Similarly, the fire that consumed sacrificial offerings to the gods, simply freed them from their material bonds so that

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[83] E.g. Aristophanes, *Aves* 1714; *Hymni Orphici* 19.8.

[84] *Iovis armiger*, Vergilius, *Aeneis* 5.255; see Usener 1913, 491–497. Zeus as eagle abducting boys appears *AP* 12.64 and 65, 67, 194, 220, 221 etc. See also the interesting stele from Lydia, Petzl 1998, no. 1; *EBGR* 1998, no. 209.

[85] Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus* 1460–1461.

[86] Pseudo-Clement, *Homiliae* 9.5 (οἱ δὲ ἀνόητοι τῶν τότε ἀνθρώπων ὡς διὰ τὴν εἰς θεὸν φιλίαν κεραυνῷ μεταπεμφθεῖσαν τὴν ψυχὴν νομίσαντες, τοῦ σώματος τὸ λείψανον κατορύξαντες, τὸν μὲν τάφον ναῷ ἐτίμησαν ἐν Πέρσαις, ἔνθα ἡ τοῦ πυρὸς καταφορὰ γέγονεν, αὐτὸν δὲ ὡς θεὸν ἐθρήσκευσαν); *Recognitiones* 4.28 (*Hoc denique exemplo etiam nunc multi eos, qui fulmine obierint, sepulcris honoratos tamquam amicos dei colunt*); see Usener 1913, 478.

[87] Festus s.v. *pullus*; see Williams 1999, 26–27. See also *Priapea* 68.5; *AP* 11.328, ll. 9–10 and McCartney 1932; Speyer 1978, 65–66 [243–244].

[88] According to some versions of Semele's demise, Zeus appeared as lightning, taking her life and bringing her to Olympus, Chariton, *De Chaerea et Callirrhoe* 3.3; Aelius Aristides, *Orationes* 41.2 = Bernabé 2004-–2007(1), no. 328.

[89] Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 52; Le Bris 2001, 105–106. See the purifying fire in *Kaibel EG*, no. 109, l. 5.

'communion' with the deities could be achieved.[90] Cremation of the body and the immortality of the deceased are referred to in an epigram from Athens (2nd century AD).[91] An epigram from Rhodes (4th–3rd century BC) for a woman called Parmenis states that the deceased was snatched from a roaring blaze by Apollo, taken to the residence of Zeus and made immortal.[92] A similar message is conveyed in the base of a tomb from Aeritae (Arīqah) in Syria which commemorates a person who died in 225/226 AD as a result of being struck by lightning (κεραυνοβολία). This epigram clearly states that the deceased achieved apotheosis in this way (ἀπεθεώθη).[93] The altar presents a hand bearing a streak of lightning, perhaps belonging to Baal-Shamin, with whom the deceased was henceforth identified. An epigram from 3rd-century AD southern Gaul, which was discovered in 1799, lost and subsequently rediscovered in 1956, states that Aurelius Diokleides, born on the birthday anniversary of Heracles, was kidnapped by the Pythian gods, probably meaning Apollo, Zeus and the Moirai.[94] The last publisher and commentator of the inscription notes that the name of the deceased, Diokleides, refers to Zeus, the father of Heracles. He suggests that we are dealing with traces of a tradition in funerary epigrams concerning the abduction and apotheosis of the deceased in the fashion of Heracles, who, burning on a pyre on top of Mount Oeta, amid thunder claps and lightning strikes, was raised to heaven by Zeus. Roman emperors modelled their 'fiery' apotheosis on that of Heracles, for from the top of an emperor's burning funeral pyre an eagle would fly.[95]

Death Caused by Lightning

The death by lightning theme in epigrams should also be considered in the context of a tradition of heroisation or apotheosis through purging by fire which was summed up in the Pythagorean and Orphic interpretations of thunderbolts killing people. Lightning strikes must have made a great

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90 Iamblichus, *De mysteriis Aegyptiorum* 12.

91 *Kaibel EG*, no. 104; *Peek GV*, no. 1971; Samellas 2002, 17, n. 20; Currie 2005, 379–380, n. 203.

92 *Peek GV*, no. 1964; *CEG*(2), no. 693; Currie 2005, 368–369.

93 Mouterde 1931, 144–147; *SEG*(7), no. 980; to be included in *IGLS*(15), no. 346, see Sartre 1993, 65; Sartre-Fauriat 2001(2), 148, 217, 220.

94 *IG*(14), no. 2436; Decourt 2004, no. 23; important corrections *EBGR* 2004, no. 61, on p. 260. For the Heracles-like apotheosis of the dead in fire, Bayet 1922–1923, 244–247; Bayet 1929.

95 Currie 2005, 378.

impression on Greeks, for that was how mythical figures such as Heracles (according to some versions the apotheosis of Heracles occurred on Mount Oeta thanks to Zeus' lightning strike),[96] Kapaneos and Semele perished, and it was also Zeus' thunderbolt that made Asclepius immortal.[97] Thetis used fire to try to make Achilles immortal[98] and similar attempts were also made by Demeter.[99] In this matter very important evidence is provided by the famous gold 'Orphic' tablets from a tumulus in Thurii (4th–3rd century BC). The deceased in tablets A1, A2 and A3 state they had been struck and subjugated by a thunderbolt (and Fate), though they formulate this concept in a somewhat different manner (the two texts are virtually identical):

> But fate subdued me, and he that wounds from the stars with lightning.
>
> ἀλ⟨λ⟩ά με μο⟨ῖ⟩ρα ἐδάμα⟨ς⟩σε {καὶ ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ ἄλλοι} καὶ ἀςστεροβλῆτα κεραυνόν·
>
> Either fate subdued me, or else he who makes the lightning blaze forth.
> (transl. A. Bernabé, A.I. Jiménez San Cristóbal)[100]
>
> ε⟨ἴ⟩τ⟨ε⟩ με μοῖρα ⟨ἐδάμασσε⟩ ε⟨ἴ⟩τ' ⟨ἀστ⟩εροπῆτι κεραυν⟨ῷ⟩?

Here death by lightning, then considered the purest form of fire, was most likely understood as a form of heroisation (or mayby even apotheosis?).[101] The heroisation (or apotheosis) of the deceased certainly played a very important role in known 'Orphic' tablets, including those from Thurii. No wonder then that this extraordinary discovery provoked a heated discussion among scholars. It is unclear whether these tablets were placed in the graves of people who had really been killed by lightning.[102] H. Lloyd-Jones argues that the key to the interpretation of the tablets is the myth of Zeus

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96 Diodorus Siculus 4.38.4–5.

97 See also Lucian, *Alexander* 59 and 247; *AP* 7.49.

98 Apollodor, *Bibliotheca* 3.13.6; see Mackie 1998.

99 Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 51.

100 Zuntz 1971, 300–305, A1–A3; Bernabé 2004–2007(2), nos. 488–490. See the recent discussion by Bernabé, Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, 109–114.

101 For the zigzag sign (thunder?) on the Orphic tablets, West 1982, 19; Bernabé, Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, 114.

102 Harrison 1903, 587; Zuntz 1971, 31; Garland 1985, 99–100; Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, 112. Death by lightning in the Orphic interpretation: Rohde 1925, 448, n. 54; Boyancé 1942; Borzsák 1951, 215–216; Kontoleon 1961–1962; Richardson 1974, 231–234; Cosi 1987; Mendelsohn 1991–1992, especially 120–124; Van Liefferinge 2000; Burgess 2001; Pugliese Carratelli 2001, 108–109; Betegh 2002, and the comments in *EBGR* 2002, no. 8. For the connections between lightning and fire and heroisation and apotheosis in the mysteries, Currie 2005, 360–405 (especially 363).

striking down the Titans with his thunderbolt as a punishment for their murder of Dionysus.[103] According to this Orphic myth, the destruction of the Titans led to the emergence of humankind.[104] One may assume that people, by identifying themselves with the Titans as their mythological forebears, also experienced their kind of thunderbolt strike when they passed away. Cleansed, they rid themselves of their earthly, Titanic nature and thus attained apotheosis.[105] F. Graf in turn is of the opinion that there is no way we can tell whether or not the stated lightning strikes should be taken literally. Saying that a given person was killed by lightning could be in reference to a number of diverse myths, for not only the Titans perished from the thunderbolts of Zeus.[106] Heracles, Semele and Asclepius were struck by lightning to undergo heroisation and apotheosis. There were also tales of Pythagoras having such a death (i.e. initiation). A thunderbolt cult surrounded the graves of Lycurgus and Euripides.[107] Lightning striking the statues of the Olympic champion Euthymos in Locri and Olympia (together with his disappearance without a trace) was treated as evidence of his heroic status.[108] According to R.G. Edmonds, it was indeed from these other myths that the creators of the 'Orphic' tablets in Thurii drew their inspiration as they were better suited than the myth of the Titans. Their heroes had originally been mortals who one way or another came into close contact with deities. All of them had in their lives committed certain indignities. All had been heroised as a result of being struck by Zeus' thunderbolt. Although it is true that Heracles was not being punished for any particular fault, both for Asclepius and for Semele being struck by lightning was both a punishment and a form of catharsis.[109] It is therefore more than probable that legends of this sort also concerned those who had not actually been killed by lightning. A vivid exemplification of easy and rapid dissemination of such 'miracles' may be found in the *Life of Carus*:

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103 Lloyd-Jones 1985, 274.

104 References Bernabé, Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, 41–42; recent surveys Parker 1995; Edmonds III (n.d.); Calame 2008.

105 Bernabé, Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, 112–113. The question of the allegorical interpretation of the Titans' fate is still debated, Boyancé 1942; Calame 2002, 387–388; Graf, Iles Johnston 2007, 125–127; Herrero de Jáuregui 2010, 22–24, 48–49.

106 Graf 1993, 253.

107 Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 31, etc.

108 Rohde 1925, 154, n. 116; Bremmer 1983, 107, n. 102; Currie 2002.

109 Edmonds III 2004, 73–75. See also Kingsley 1995, 257–258; Betegh 2002.

> When Carus, our prince for whom we truly care, was lying ill, there suddenly arose a storm of such violence that all things grew black and none could recognize another; then continuous flashes of lightning and peals of thunder, like bolts from a fiery sky, took from us the power of knowing what truly befell. For suddenly, after an especially violent peal which had terrified all, it was shouted that the emperor was dead. It came to pass, in addition, that the chamberlains, grieving for the death of their prince, fired his tent; and the rumour arose, whatever its source, that he had been killed by the lightning, whereas, as far as we can tell, it seems sure that he died of his illness.
>
> (transl. D. Magie)[110]
>
> *Inter cetera "Cum," inquit, "Carus, princeps noster vere carus, aegrotaret, tanti turbinis subito exorta tempestas est ut caligarent omnia, neque alterutrum nosceret; coruscationum deinde ac tonitruum in modum fulgurum igniti sideris continuata vibratio omnibus nobis veritatis scientiam sustulit. Subito enim conclamatum est imperatorem mortuum, et post illud praecipue tonitruum quod cuncta terruerat. His accessit quod cubicularii dolentes principis mortem incenderunt tentorium. unde unde fuit, fama emersit fulmine interemptum eum quem, quantum scire possumus, aegritudine constat absumptum."*

Between Miracles, Allegories, and Fables

The short survey of such complex traditions leads us to some significant conclusions regarding the topic discussed in previous chapters. Regardless of whether or not one assumes a soteriological meaning to the kidnapping of the deceased by deities, it is hard not to agree that these myths were related to deep-rooted religious concepts in ancient Greek culture. Without these religious concepts one cannot understand the funerary poetry. The heroisation of the deceased—both in the poetic and in the cult sense—was based on the fundamental conviction that the deceased became in some way beings of a higher order. Its particular form was a belief that through being abducted by a god the deceased entered a sacred zone. Plutarch disagreed with those who believed in such body and soul abductions, stating that only the soul could return from whence it came.[111] In pagan and folk beliefs people abducted by gods were frequently considered to be transferred to a different, better reality. Thus selected people avoided the normal vicissitudes of the human condition, including old age and death. The abduction was seen as a radical contradiction of death. It meant that a given person's

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110 *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* 30, *Carus, Carinus, Numerianus* 8.5–7. For literary employment see *AP* 7.173 and 174.

111 Plutarch, *Romulus* 28. See ad loc. Cumont 1942, 124, n. 2.

entire body and soul entered an afterlife of happiness without ever encountering the threat of death.[112] Specific types of death suggested abduction by a deity and heroisation: death by lightning strike, being engulfed by the earth, blown away by the wind or drowned in a river or spring. An entire 'folklore' emerged around such deaths.[113] A human disappearance (ἀφᾰνισμός, ἀφᾰνῐσις) could even start a regular, local cult for the victim, like in the case of the mythological seer Amphiaraus and the hero Trophonios. The point of a well-known tale of the philosopher Empedocles throwing himself into the volcanic crater of Mount Etna was to demonstrate that he did not die an ordinary death but was instead taken alive by gods to the other world. This was probably merely a parody of a popular legend of this sort.[114] Equally telling is the attitude of Alexander the Great, who once considered throwing himself into the Euphrates so that after death he would become the hero of legend and cult.[115] Here the story of how the philosopher Herakleides of Heraclea Pontica usurped for himself a heroic cult after death seems analogous.[116] Worshippers of Dionysus in Italy even posed fake kidnappings by gods, which goes to show how widespread belief in supernatural phenomena was.[117]

But neither should we ignore evidence of allegorical interpretations in that era. In the case of at least some of the readers of epigrams one needs to take into account the possibility that the text was not understood in the strictly literal sense. No doubt, for some of the elite there were certain discernible similarities between children's stories and the mythological tales that were recorded on tombstones.[118] While in such circles mythology was no longer the subject of naïve faith, it was still something more than a mere collection of entertaining stories. Philosophers had discovered a way to compromise the widespread scepticism concerning the adventures of gods and heroes with a natural attachment to the history and ancient cults of specific towns. They decided that behind the literal sense of the frequently naïve or

112 Nock 1946, 168, n. 100.

113 E.g. *Peek GV*, no. 1097. For the discussion, Pfister 1909–1912(2), 480–489; Lacroix 1988; Larson 2001, 66.

114 Diogenes Laertios, *De clarorum philosophorum vitis* 8.69, see Rohde 1925, 401–402, n. 61; 537–538; Kingsley 1995, 278–288 and testimonia in Inwood 2001, 153–208.

115 Arrian, *Anabasis* 7.27.3. See Himmelmann 1990, 118; the similar case of Julian the Apostate, Nock 1957, 122, n. 52.

116 Diogenes Laertios, *De clarorum philosophorum vitis* 5.89–91. See Himmelmann 1990, 118.

117 Livy 39.13, see Pallier 1976 and references in Turcan 2003, 6, no. 15 and p. 8.

118 Sorabella 2001 ad Philostratus, *Imagines* 1.1.15. The deceased Romana in the epigram discussed on pp. 19–20 alluded to this, *SGO*(4), no. 18/15/13.

shocking tales there was hidden a deeper, metaphorical sense. Pythagoreans, Stoics and Neoplatonists put this theory into practice and thus, so it was said, saved Homer, whom Plato had expelled from the Republic. The myth became a moral parable or metaphysical message. But ancient literary sources are virtually silent in the case of the Ganymede myth. In order to support his eschatological, soteriological and allegorical explanation of Ganymede's fate, F. Cumont used the Stoic and Pythagorean interpretation of the abduction of Kore myth, but his 'direct' evidence comes solely from Eustathius' commentary to Homer's *Iliad*, which was written in the 12th century AD.[119] Cumont's theory, nevertheless, seems to be confirmed by J. Dillon's reconstruction of a Stoic allegorical tradition regarding the Ganymede myth.[120] What counts is the fact that the practice of allegorising myths was not limited to a narrow circle of scholars and philosophers, but was also adopted in schools, among teachers who thus explained Homeric poetry.[121] Funerary epigrams, whose authors, purchasers and readers were largely people from the upper echelons of society, must have reflected this change in attitude towards traditions and myths. Of course there were others who did not have this abstract approach and treated tales of heroes, gods, the Isles of the Blessed and entering Olympus as quite real and literal promises.[122] When discussing the doctrine of the Ophites in his *Refutation of All Heresies*, Hippolytus cites their leader, Justin, who is supposed to have stated that if people are heard saying an eagle went in unto Ganymede, it should be interpreted as a metaphor, just like the Christian allegory where Naas (Hebrew for snake, i.e. fallen angel) is the eagle and Adam is Ganymede.[123]

The Ganymede abduction myth above all symbolised the tragic, premature death of someone in the flower of beauty and youth.[124] Yet in the light of the above evidence, one should stress the eschatological aspect of the myth, which was associated with lightning strike symbolism and the epiphany of Zeus himself as a saviour. One cannot rule out (as some scholars do) that Ganymede's abduction in this way opened up the prospect of salvation and

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[119] For the Stoic and Pythagorean exegesis of Persephone's abduction, Boyancé 1937, 242–247; Cumont 1942, 95–97.

[120] The question of the allegorical interpretation of Ganymede is still open; arguments contra are collected in Pépin 1958, 423–428, 438–441; pro Dillon 1981.

[121] Boyancé 1943, 293–294.

[122] Engemann 1973, 52–56.

[123] Hippolytus, *Refutatio omnium haeresium* 5.26.34; for the Gnostic allegorical interpretation of Ganymede, ibidem, 5.14.10.

[124] Cumont 1942, 28, 97–99. For the actual age of the addressees of such epitaphs (not always young), Engemann 1972, 1041; Engemann 1973, 58–59.

happiness in the afterlife for anyone.[125] A.-D. Nock's interpretation,[126] which limits the Ganymede funerary theme to praising the earthly virtues of the deceased and an expression of the sense of great loss felt by that person's family and friends, ignores the fact that, according to the myth, Ganymede was taken to Olympus and became immortal.[127] In this particular group of funerary epigrams the abduction of the deceased by a deity offered something more than the comfort of avoiding life's hardships and old age, which was the traditional message in consolatory literature. They went beyond the occasionally cited variations of Menander's sentence. Here the chosen ones faced a prospect of happiness in the afterlife thanks to a deity experiencing a passionate onrush of affection. Their beauty was a sign of distinction, resulting in premature, sudden death, which was nothing less than the favouritism of a deity who ultimately took the deceased up to heaven.[128] This form of heroisation differed from other forms of apotheosis and heroisation expressed in funerary epigrams. In a sense it was an equivalent of the official heroisations of distinguished citizens conferred by their native πόλις, except here the initiator was not the πόλις but a deity. As perpetrators of the 'abduction' these deities played a different role to the deities of fate or the underworld. They kidnapped their chosen ones to various destinations of eternal happiness: the Ether, the heavens, the homes of the 'pious,' the 'blessed' and even a place among the gods. The theme was most fully developed in funerary epigrams referring to the myth of abduction (including that of Ganymede) by (the thunderbolt of) Zeus, most of which originated from the 2nd–3rd centuries AD.

125 Zanker, Ewald 2004, 67–68 for the consolatory meaning.

126 Nock 1946, 168, n. 100. Nock allowed, however, for some exceptions, Nock 1924, 108; Nock 1946, 167.

127 Sichtermann 1992, 69, n. 137. Sichtermann's claim that in antiquity 'pederasty' was widely accepted is simplistic.

128 Engemann 1973, 47; Le Bris 2001, 97–112.

CHAPTER SIX

THE DECEASED AS THE CHARGES OF DEITIES

Isidora, Hylas and the Nymphs

The purpose of this section of the book is to discuss the last category of glorious, redeeming, divine abductions of the dead which constitute the major theme of verse-inscriptions under consideration. A specific form of abduction by deities is found in the epigrams referring to the well-known ancient concept of nympholepsy. Although it consists of a relatively small group of testimonies, their distinct features will allow for an insight into the mechanisms of variation in funerary poetry. This, in turn, will also shed some light on the appearance of the dead in verse-inscriptions generally. There are many discernible factors determining the development of funerary repertoire. However, my argument is that these factors are subjectively and psychologically conditioned, and possible eschatological and soteriological imagery should not be overstated.

The νυμφόληπτοι were those who, according to popular belief, had been haunted by Nymphs, and overcome by a sort of μᾰνία. In effect they either lost their sanity or acquired special talents, e.g. the ability to see into the future. The term νυμφόληπτος could also simply mean being abducted by Nymphs.[1] Colloquially, the phrase 'kidnapped by Nymphs' was also used as a metaphor for premature death.[2] The superstition that Nymphs abducted good-looking youths to share their lives with them in the mountains, amid the forests and streams became an integral part of ancient Greek and Greco-Roman folklore.[3] It was also present in later times in Greek folklore with the Nereids.

[1] Larson 2001, 13–14. Regarding nympholepsy, Pfister 1940, especially 104; Cumont 1949, 325–326; Himmelmann-Wildschütz 1957a; Himmelmann-Wildschütz 1957b; references in van Straten 1976, 19, n. 279; Borgeaud 1988, 104–107; Ustinova 2009, 61–64.

[2] Vermeule 1979, 162–169, 247, nos. 26–35. For the abductions by Nymphs, Schröder 1902, 69–70, 69, n. 6; Ballentine 1904; Rohde 1925, 567, n. 195; Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1931–1932(1), 185–191; Ferri 1938; Cumont 1942, 402, n. 3; Muthmann 1975, 36–38, 87–123; Scheinberg 1979; Barringer 1991; Purvis 2003, 33–63; Sourvinou-Inwood 2005, 109–112.

[3] Petronius 63: *Puerum strigae involaverant.*

There are also extant funerary epigrams commemorating people of both sexes who at a young age had been kidnapped by Nymphs.[4] Among the most famous of these are epigrams written in black ink on the inside wall of the vestibule to a burial chamber (the so-called grave of Isidora), which was discovered in 1931 by the archaeologist Samy Gabra in the ancient necropolis of Hermoupolis Magna (Egyptian name: Touna-el-Gebel) in Egypt, from which also comes the famous tomb of Petosiris. The epigrams appear to date from the 1st century AD:

Indeed the Nymphs built you this chamber, Isidora,
Nymphs, daughters of the water.
It was begun by Nilo, the oldest daughter of the Nile, and she prepared a shell,
like the one she holds in her depths,
that can be looked down on in [their] father's home, a divine [beauty].
Whereas Krenaia, sharing her bed with abducted Hylas,
[placed] columns on either side, resembling a grotto,
where she herself holds Hylas, taking him in her arms, as he carried a jug of water.
While the Oreads, having selected the place, raised a temple,
so that you would not receive anything inferior from them.

No more shall I sacrifice to you, my daughter, with lamentation.
Now I know that you have become a goddess.
With libations and prayers celebrate Isidora,
The maiden who has been snatched away by the Nymphs.
Greetings, my child; Nymph is your name, and see—the Seasons
each year pour the libations appropriate to them;
Winter pours white milk, the oily blossom of the olive,
And garlands you with narcissus, the most delicate flower;
Spring sends here without our asking the product of the bee
And the opening bud of the rose, the flower dear to Eros;
The hot season then sends the drink from the press of Bacchus' vat, and for you a crown
Of a bunch of grapes, binding the grapes onto their stems.
These, then, are for you; each year all these will be performed here
As a rite for the immortals. And that is why I myself
No more shall sacrifice to you, my daughter, with lamentation.
(the second epigram transl. J. Rowlandson, et al.)[5]

ὄντως αἱ Νύμφαι σοι ἐτεκτήναντ', Ἰσιδώρα,
Νύμφαι τῶν ὑδάτων θυγατέρες θάλαμον·

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4 See *Peek GV*, no. 378 (Νυμφῶν λάτρις = νυμφόληπτος?); ad loc. see *BE* 1958, no. 108; Robert 1940–1965(13), 186–187.

5 *Peek GV*, no. 1897; Bernand 1999, nos. 77–78.

πρεσβυτάτη Νίλοιο θυγατρῶν ἤρξατο, Νιλώ,
κόγχον τευξαμένη, βένθεσιν οἷον ἔχει,
added in margin: πατρὸς ἐνὶ̣μ̣ μεγάροισι, θεηδ̣ῆ οἷον ἰδέσθαι·
κρηναία δέ, Ὕλα σύνγαμος ἁρ̣παγίμου,
κείονας ἀμφοτέρωθεν, ἅτε σπέος, ἧχι καὶ αὐτὴ
πηχύνασα̣ Ὕ̣λον καλποφόρον κατέχει·
κρεινάμεναι δ’ ἄρα χῶρον ᾿Ορειάδες ἱδρύσαντο
ἱερόν, ὡς αὐτῶν μηδὲν ἀφαυρὸν ἔχῃς.

οὐκέτι σοι μέλλω θύειν, θύγα[τερ μετ]ὰ κλ̣[α]υ̣θμοῦ,
ἐξ οὗ δὴ ἔγνων, ὡς θεὸς ἐξεγένου.
λοιβαῖς εὐφημεῖτε καὶ εὐχωλαῖς ᾿Ισιδώραν,
ἣ νύμφη Νυμφῶν ἁρπαγίμη γέγονεν.
χαῖρε, τέκος· νύμφη ὄνομ’ ἐστί σοι, ἰδέ τε Ὧραι
σπένδουσιν προχοαῖς ταῖς ἰδί[α]ι̣ς̣ κατ’ ἔτος·
χειμὼν μὲν γάλα λευκόν, ἀλε̣ί̣φατον ἄνθος ἐλαίης,
ναρκίσσωι δὲ στέφει ἄνθει ἀβροτάτωι·
εἶαρ δ’ αὐτομάτης πέμπει γόνον ἔνθα μελίσσης,
καὶ ῥόδον ἐκ καλύκων, ἄνθος Ἔρωτι φίλον·
καῦμα δ’ ἄρ’ ἐκ ληνοῦ Βάκχου πόμα καὶ στέφανόν σοι
ἐκ σταφυλῆς, δῆσαν βότρυας ἀκρεμόνων.
ταῦτά νυ σοί· τάδε πάντα ἐτήσια ἔνθα τελεῖται
τεθμὸς ἅτ’ ἀθανάτοις· τοὔνεκα δ’ αὐτὸς ἐγὼ
οὐκέτι σοι μέλλω θύειν, θύγατερ, μετὰ κλαυθμοῦ.

The apotheosis of Isidora in all probability resulted from the special circumstances of her death; she may have drowned. In poetic and religious convention the phrase ‘abducted (ἁρπαγίμη) by Nymphs’ suggests the cause of the girl’s premature death.[6] It was the Nymphs, daughters of ‘the water’ (i.e. the Nile), who constructed the tomb in the shape of a shell. An ornament of this sort was indeed found in the burial chamber recess, on the ceiling over the body of the deceased. Isidora’s temple was to resemble a grotto where, according to the author of the epigram, the Nymph, Krenaia, placed her kidnapped mythical youth, Hylas. According to the best known version of the myth this was the son of the king of the Dryopians, the first inhabitants of the Greek peninsula. His father was killed by Heracles, but Hylas soon became his father’s slayer’s favourite, that is, ἐρωμένη.[7] He accompanied Heracles in the expedition of the Argonauts. It was during this expedition that he was once sent to fetch some water, and it was then that Nymphs (or a Nymph,

6 Raimondi 1998 for the term ἁρπάγιμος, appearing here twice, and nowhere else in verse-inscriptions. See, however, a fragment of the funerary epigram with ἁρπάγιμ̣[ο]ν, *IK*(29), no. 89.

7 Mauerhofer 2004.

or, according to other versions, Nereids), enchanted by his beauty, pulled him into the spring. While the details of his fate are uncertain, the known myth at least speaks of him falling into the water and making a (marriage) bond with a Nymph. Some versions of the myth have Hylas as a lover of the Nymphs, with whom he is to spend eternity in happiness. In the afterlife he becomes immortal and attains the status of μάκαρ or even apotheosis.[8]

In order to understand the apotheosis of the deceased Isidora, one needs to determine to whom the epigram was addressed, i.e. whether it appealed to Egyptian beliefs and notions or whether it appealed to Greek ones. The opinions of scholars are divided. Is it possible in this context to speak of a fusion of the Egyptian idea of apotheosis by drowning in the Nile with the Greek idea of heroisation as a result of being kidnapped by Nymphs? There is no doubt that in ancient Egyptian tradition people who drowned in the Nile became beings of a higher order or even gods, and thus deserved an appropriate cult.[9] The bodies of those drowned in the Nile or taken by crocodiles were said to have supernatural attributes, for which reason they were buried in a special way.[10] They could only be touched by priests and special temples were erected for them. The original example of this apotheosis was given by none other than Osiris, whose body was drowned in the Nile.[11] However, the widespread tradition among Egyptians of deifying people *post mortem* was basically alien to the culture of the Greeks. They instead were familiar with the practice of heroising the deceased. One of its forms was the aforementioned tradition concerning the prematurely deceased (including the victims of drowning), abducted by Nymphs or sea Nereids, who became immortal and destined to spend eternity with goddesses.[12] Yet death in water was not in itself strictly connected with heroisation or apotheosis. For example, in the Hylas myth the spring is important only because it was the residence of a Nymph or Nymphs. Here the drowning was at most a *modus rapiendi*, while in Egyptian tradition, as the epigram for Isidora suggests, drowning had a deeper meaning on account of its association with the cult of the Nile and Osiris.

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8 See the Homeric *Hymnus ad Venerem* 256–263.

9 Griffith 1909–1910; Bataille 1952, 229–231; Hopfner 1974–1990(2.1), paragraphs 128–130; Brashear 1995, 3463, n. 411. For the drowning of Isidora, Hani 1974; Raimondi 1998.

10 References in Bremmer 1983, 107, n. 104.

11 Osiris' death was, however, not by drowning.

12 See the case of Antinous, deified favourite of Hadrian, who drowned in the Nile, Meyer 1991, especially 186–188; Livrea 2002, 20 and n. 6; Jones 2010, 75–83. For the importance of Nymphs in his apotheosis, Magnelli 1998, 63–64.

In Greek culture death by drowning was not considered a particular honour or reason for glory in the afterlife but rather a misfortune that denied the deceased a dignified burial in his/her native land.[13] Here only rarely do we find positive interpretations of drownings as reasons for heroisation or apotheosis. According to a myth, Ino and her son, Melikertes, who were persecuted by Athamas, jumped into the sea, as a result of which the gods turned them into the deities Leucothea and Palaemon.[14] It is their drowning, resulting in apotheosis and name change (μετονομᾰσία), that resembles the fate of Isidora, who herself became a Nymph. In a state of despair after the death of his sons, King Proteus of Pallene in Chalkidiki, leapt into the sea and thus became a god of the sea.[15] All available pieces of evidence are, nevertheless, dispersed, too few in number and far from explicit in meaning. We are therefore forced to conclude that while there may have been an association between the heroisation of the prematurely deceased and abductions by Nymphs, such heroisations were not associated with the mythology of death by drowning per se.

This suggests a further conclusion: the myth of Hylas being captured by the Nymphs allowed for the specific form of the deceased Isidora's apotheosis to be extolled in the epigrams, an idea that was essentially alien to Greek culture, but one which was full-heartedly desired by her father.[16] He referred to his prematurely taken daughter, who in his eyes would forever be young, as beautiful and universally worshipped as a goddess. It was as if the disconsolate parent wished to force himself to believe that the broad mythological landscape was centred around his Isidora. Like the prophet of a new cult, he summoned not only members of his family, but also any subsequent 'believers' (i.e. casual passers-by) to honour the new Nymph. Thus the funeral offerings turned into joyous greetings, the mourners became worshippers, the deceased became a goddess and the grave became her temple.[17] The almost polar opposites, the deceased goddess, the grave-cum-temple, the mourning coupled with cries of joy (χαῖρε), which formed the fabric of the

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13 Raimondi 1998.

14 Beaulieu 2008, especially 114–125.

15 Pseudo-Nonnos, *Collectio et expositio historiarum* 2 = *PG* 36.988. An intriguing epitaph from Kotiaion (according to commentators either of Christian, heretical or pagan origins), *Kaibel EG*, no. 366; *SGO*(3), no. 16/32 / 03, speaks of the deceased beloved by gods who, having been washed by the water of immortality, was led to the Isle of the Blessed. Perhaps this was an allusion to a sort of pagan baptism. See also *SGO*(1), no. 01/12 / 09 and *SGO*(4), no. 19/21/02.

16 Raimondi 1998.

17 Bernand 1969, nos. 86–87.

composition were something more than a purely literary effect.[18] The thus expressed personal feelings were authentic and sincere even if they did not constitute a composition of the highest standard from an artistic point of view.

The Deceased and Nymphs in Epigrams

For the above mentioned reasons the epigrams for Isidora constitute a very specific, individual case of apotheosis of a girl abducted by Nymphs. Most of the other examples come from Rome; almost all of these date from the time of the Principate (1st–2nd centuries AD). On the tomb of a five-year-old girl the parents are called upon to believe in ancient myths and realise that their daughter was taken like a spring rose by Naiads, whom she had enchanted, and not by death:

> Immorally you abducted to the underworld, Lord Pluto,
> a five-year-old girl who was praised by all;
> as if a sweet smelling rose that in the springtime blooms
> you had cut from the root before her time was due. But, Alexandra and Philtatos,
> shed no more tears of grief over your lovely daughter,
> for she was full of charm, and so was her attractive face,
> and that is why she [now] resides in the timeless home of Ether.
> Believe therefore the ancient tale:[19] this noble child
> has been abducted by Naiads for joy, not death.
>
> to Tineia Hygeia, our most beloved ward, in memoriam.[20]
>
> οὐχ ὁσίως ἥρπαξες ὑπὸ [χθόνα], κοίρανε Πλουτεῦ,
> πενταέτη νύμφην πᾶσιν ἀγαλλομένην·
> οἷα γὰρ ἀρχόμενον ῥόδον εὔπνοον εἴαρος ὥρῃ
> ἐξέτεμες ῥείζης, πρὶν χρόνον ἐκτελέσῃ.
> ἀλλ' ἄγ' Ἀλεξάνδρα καὶ Φίλτατε, μηκέτ' ὀδυρμοῖς
> εἱμερτῇ κούρῃ σπένδετε μυρόμενοι·
> εἶχεν γὰρ χάριν, εἶχεν ἐφ' ἡδυχρόοισι προσώποις,
> αἰθέρος ὥστε μένειν ἀθανάτοισι δόμοις.
> τοῖς πάρος οὖν μύθοις πιστεύσατε· παῖδα γὰρ ἐσθλὴν
> ἥρπασαν ὡς τερπνὴν Ναΐδες, οὐ Θάνατος.
>
> Τινηΐᾳ Ὑγείᾳ τῇ ἰδίᾳ θρεπτῇ φιλτάτηι μνήμης χάριν.

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[18] Eitrem 1937, 313–316.
[19] Probably an allusion to the myth of Hylas.
[20] *Kaibel EG*, no. 570, *Peek GV*, no. 1595, *IGUR*(3), no. 1344.

From the same epoch (1st–2nd century AD) comes an epigram for Philesia, who earned herself the honour of being abducted by the Nymphs of a spring, even though she was less than two years old:

> Nymphs of the spring snatched me from life,
> and it was probably as a sign of [my] glory that I experienced it,
> a child, not even two years old,
> called Philesia, from Ausonia.[21]

> Νύμφαι κρηναῖαί με συνήρπασαν ἐκ βιότοιο,
> καὶ τάχα που τιμῆς εἵνεκα τοῦτ᾽ ἔπαθον,
> νηπίη οὐδὲ δυοῖν ἐτέοιν τέλος ἐξανύσασα,
> Φιλησίη τὴν κλῆσιν, Αὐσονὶς γένος.

From Rome we also have a Latin epitaph:

> Here lies M. Ulpius Firmus, a foster child. The good soul was returned to the gods of the underworld. He was dragged along by the water [i.e. by the Nymphs]. He lived for just nine years and six months, to the disappointment of his parents. Ulpius Nymphicus erected this stone for his dearest son.
> (transl. C. Laes)[22]

> *Hic sitvs est M. Ulpius Firmus A. l., anima bona superis reddita, raptus a Nymphis, vix. ann. VIIII m. VI, deceptor parentorum, Ulpius Nymphicus fil. dulcissimo.*

The remaining examples originated from the Greek East. In an epigram from Asia Minor (Cyzicus, 1st–2nd century AD) the deceased lives with pious Nymphs:

> This grave only the name, but Mikke's soul
> the pious and the bounds of the Elysian Fields have in possession.
> Such an honour she experienced for [her] modesty;
> time, which does violence to bodies, did not maltreat her immortality,
> but among the pious maidens she resides as a young [girl].
> [Her] husband holds her in living memory.[23]

> Μίκκης οὔνομα μοῦνον ἔχει τάφος, εὐσεβέες δὲ
> ψύχην καὶ πεδίων τέρμονες Ἠλυσίων·
> τοῦτο σαοφροσύνης ἔλαχεν γέρας, ἀμβροσίη[ν] δὲ
> σώματος ὑβριστὴς οὐκ ἐπάτησε χρόνος,
> ἀλλὰ νέη νύμφῃσι μετ᾽ εὐσε[βέ]ες⟨ς⟩ι κάθηται,
> ἀνέρος ἐν μνήμῃ [κάρ]τα φυλασσομένη.

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21 That is Italy, *Kaibel EG*, no. 571; *Peek GV*, no. 952; *IGUR*(3), no. 1350.

22 *CIL*(6), no. 29195; *ILS* 8482.

23 *Kaibel EG*, no. 338; *Peek GV*, no. 1764; *IK*(18), no. 524; *SGO*(2), no. 08/01/50.

A fairly peculiar case concerns an epigram on a stele from Kirift in Syria (perhaps from Hauran, somewhere to the south of Damascus). It takes the form of a prayer to goddesses, Nymphs and Nereids, who were to have received into their company a young woman called Onezathe:

> Nymphs and Nereids, receive Onezathe,
> daughter of Olephas (or Olephos or Olephes), pure and high-born wife of Proclus,
> at the age of 37, on October 18, 328. (transl. A.D. Nock)[24]

> Νύμφ[αὶ] κ[αὶ] Ν[η]ρεῖδες δέξασθε Ὀνεζάθην
> Ὀλεφου, ἁγνὴν εὐγενίδα γυν[αῖ]κα⟨ν⟩ Πρόκλου,
> ἐτῶν λζ′, ἔτ[ε]ι σκγ′ Ὑπερβ[ερεταίου] ιή.

On a tomb from Seleukeia in Cilicia (2nd century AD) we find yet another variation on this theme:

> Diocles, son of Diocles, for his son Synphoros.

> This stele, traveller, is the monument of Synphoros, the son of Diocles,
> who dearly loved wisdom. He lost his life aged 19,
> when in winter, far from his fatherland, he set out on a ship to the deep sea.
> Nymphs have concealed him in an [underwater] grotto, and affectionately care for him.
> Whereas in his fatherland his tomb [was erected]; look, the image on this stone
> shows his figure, as the father for the memory of his son has presented.[25]

> [Διο]κλῆς Διοκλέους [Συν]φόρω τῷ υἱω.

> [Ἁ]στάλα τὸ μνᾶμα Διοκλέος, ὦ ξ[ένε, παιδὸς]
> [Συν]φόρου, ὃν σοφίας ὁ γλυκὺς εἶχ[εν ἔρως·]
> [ἐννε]ακαιδεκέτας δὲ διώλετο τᾶ[σδ' ἀπὸ γαίας]
> [χει]μέριος στείχων ναΐ βαθεῖαν ἅ[λα·]
> [ἐκρ]ύφθη δ' ἄντρωι Νυμφᾶν ὕπο θη[λυτεράων,]
> [αἶσι μ]έλοι, πατρίωι γᾶι δ' ἐνὶ τύ[μβον ἔχει·]
> [εἰκό]να [τ]οῦ μορφᾶς πέτρωι ἔνι, [φεῦ, χαριέσσας,]
> [μνα]μόσ[υν]ον τέκνου τὰν ἐνέθ[ηκε πατήρ].

From Hellenistic times onwards abductions by Nymphs became a favourite literary theme, as for example in Callimachus' poem the shepherd Astakides is abducted by a Nymph and thus becomes 'holy' (ἱερός).[26] The Hylas theme

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24 Nock 1961; to be included in *IGLS*(13.2), no. 9674, see Sartre-Fauriat 2001(2), 166, 217.

25 *Peek GV*, no. 634; *SGO*(4), no. 19/05/03.

26 *AP* 7.518; Callimachus, *Epigrammata* 24. See Eitrem 1937; Gow, Page 1965(2), 193–194; Larson 1997.

was very popular in Hellenistic and Greco-Roman period literature. An interesting version of the story appears in a funerary epigram from Notion (the port of Colophon) on the Ionian coast of Asia Minor (1st century AD):

> After supper, when Helios had entered the night [?] quarters, with [my] uncle
> I went to bathe, and soon the Moirai made it happen
> that when I sat on the edge of the well, I slipped [?],
> and mean Moira abducted me—when the goddess saw me at the bottom,
> she passed me on to Charon. But in that time
> [my] uncle heard something fall into the well, and immediately started searching for me.
> I no longer had any hope to be alive among people.
> [My] aunt came running, and tore off her chiton;
> my mother also came, and started beating her chest in despair.
> And soon my aunt fell to Alexandros' feet,
> who seeing this, no longer hesitated and immediately leapt into the well.
> After he had found me at the bottom, drowned, he pulled me out in a basket,
> and soon my mother grabbed my drenched body
> to quickly see if I had any life left in me.
> Woe is me, the unfortunate one who did not see the palaestra,
> but when barely three years old was buried by mean Moira.[27]

> *ἡνίκα δ' ἠέλιος μὲν ἔδυ πρὸς δώματα [πόντου,]*
> *δειπνήσας, ἦλθον μετὰ τοῦ μήτρω λο[έσας]θαι,*
> *κεὐθύς με Μοῖραι προκαθίζανον εἰς φ[ρέ]αρ αὐτοῦ·*
> *ἔγδυνον γὰρ ἐγὼ{ι} καὶ ἀπῆγέ με Μοῖρα κακίστη.*
> *χὡς εἶδεν δαίμων με κάτω, παρέδωκε Χ[άρ]ωνει·*
> *αὐτὰρ ὁ μήτρως μου ψόφον ἤκουσεν φρεατισμοῦ,*
> *κεὐθύς μ' ἐζήτει γ' ἄρ'· ἐγὼ δὲ οὐκ ἐλπίδ' ἂν εἶχον*
> *ζωῆς τῆς κατ' ἐμαυτὸν ἐν ἀνθρώποισι μιγῆναιν.*
> *ἔτρεχεν ἡ νάννη καὶ σχείζει τόν γẹ χιτῶνα·*
> *ἔτρεχε γ' ἡ μήτηρ καὶ ἵστατο ἤγẹ τυπητόν.*
> *κεὐθὺς 'Αλεξάνδρῳ πρὸς γούνατα πρόσπεσε νάννη,*
> *κοὐκ ἔτ' ἔμελλεν ἰδών, ἐνπήδα δ' εἰς φρέαρ εὐθύς.*
> *ὡς εὗρέν με κάτω βεβυθισμένον ἐξήνεν[κ]ẹν ἐ⟨ν⟩ κοφίνῳ·*
> *κεὐθὺς δὴ νάννη με διάβροχον ἥρπασε θᾶς⟨ς⟩ον,*
> *σκεπτομένη ζωῆς ἤ⟨ν⟩ τιν' ἔχω μερίδα·*
> *ὢ δ' ἐμὲ τὸν [δύς]τηνον τὸν οὐκ ἐφιδόντα παλαίς[τρα]ν,*
> *ἀλλ' ἤδη τριετῆ [–] Μοῖρα [κάλ]ụψε κακή.*

This epigram refers to the tale of Hylas being kidnapped by Nymphs. According to the myth, on the day of his abduction, the youth was accompanied

[27] *Peek GV*, no. 1159; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 101; *SGO*(1), no. 03/05/04; *SEG*(53.2), no. 1306.

by an older 'guardian,' namely Heracles; that day they ate supper together.[28] It is not by chance that in describing how the aunt/wet-nurse grabbed the boy the word ἁρπάζω was used, which was also used when deities took people away to the afterlife.[29] The author of the following epigram travesties two verses from the *Greek Anthology* by Poseidippus or Callimachus. These include a description of the drowning of three-year-old Archianax, who played over a well and peered too deeply into his own reflection:

> The dumb image of himself attracted Archianax the three year old boy, as he was playing by the well. His mother dragged him all dripping from the water, asking herself if any life was left in him. The child defiled not with death the dwelling of the Nymphs, but fell asleep on his mother's knees, and slumbers sound. (transl. W.R. Paton)[30]

> Τὸν τριετῆ παίζοντα περὶ φρέαρ Ἀρχιάνακτα
> εἴδωλον μορφᾶς κωφὸν ἐπεσπάσατο·
> ἐκ δ' ὕδατος τὸν παῖδα διάβροχον ἅρπασε μάτηρ
> σκεπτομένα, ζωᾶς εἴ τινα μοῖραν ἔχει.
> Νύμφας δ' οὐκ ἐμίηνεν ὁ νήπιος, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ γούνοις
> ματρὸς κοιμαθεὶς τὸν βαθὺν ὕπνον ἔχει.

Despite similarities in the plot, the message in this epitaph is quite different, for the boy dies peacefully on his mother's lap, amid the elegant references to the fate of Narcissus and the cult of the Nymphs. We are therefore dealing with references to high literature (the author of the epitaph must have known the original verses in the *Greek Anthology*), and at the same time, quite astonishingly for that era, a direct description of what actually happened.

Meaning: Eschatological, Not Soteriological

Scenes depicting the abduction of Hylas appeared quite frequently on tombs in the epoch from when these epigrams originate, i.e. the 1st–3rd century AD. The most famous examples include paintings on the sepulchre of Nasonii (Rome, Via Flaminia, 1st–2nd century AD)[31] and on the column in

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[28] Antoninus Liberalis, *Metamorphoses* 26.

[29] Elsewhere (p. 168, n. 39) I discuss the parallels between the abductions of Hylas and of Persephone.

[30] *AP* 7.170, see Gow, Page 1965(1), 172–173 (ll. 3176/3177); ibidem(2), 501; Piacenza 1998.

[31] Eisler 1921, 164 and pl. 12.73; Eisler 1925, 159–172; Cumont 1942, 402–403, n. 3; Andreae 1963, 88–130; Ling 1979, 805–806, no. 23; 808, no. 32.

Igel. The myth was also presented in the reliefs of the so-called mythological sarcophagi. Statius mentions it in a poetic consolation for the death of a slave, suggesting that Nymphs were playing with him in the afterlife, and this is indeed confirmation that the myth was also used in consolations.[32] Therefore, when epigrams mentioned kidnapping by Nymphs and a fate similar to that of Hylas, was it not only a poetic way of accentuating the beauty of the deceased but also a means of stressing the hope of happiness in the afterlife or even apotheosis? Did such epigrams belong to the relatively small group bearing a positive message about the afterlife? Was use of the abduction-by-Nymphs myth equivalent to an optimistic soteriology or eschatology? Opinions among scholars are divided. Using the Onezathe epitaph as an example, A.-D. Nock denied that reference to the Nereids was evidence of any particular religious beliefs. In his opinion, it was more a reflection of the author's literary aspirations. Nymphs and Nereids symbolised the world of everlasting beauty and youth. In antiquity they epitomised ideal femininity, and therefore reference to them inferred the deceased's beauty. Another important aspect here was the bucolic setting.[33] Moreover, Hylas also appeared in other art, not only in the funerary context, e.g. in mosaics, and therefore his appearance on tombs need not have had a special meaning.

Yet according to some scholars there was more to it than literary, poetic or artistic convention. After all, mythological tradition concerning relations between Nymphs and mortals included the hope of life after death. The Nymph Calypso offered Odysseus immortality on condition that he remained with her for eternity.[34] The Nymph Thetis wedded the mortal Peleus and, in accordance with Zeus' wish, made him an immortal god.[35] Ino, the wife of the king of Thebes, leapt into the sea, was received by the Nereids and became the goddess Leucothea.[36] F. Cumont even suggested, without referring to historical sources, that belief in abductions by Nymphs was linked with the belief that souls were carried away by the wind. Thus, in his opinion, Nymphs and Nereids carried the deceased up to heaven. Referring to such myths indicated a form of salvation, for added to the folklore beliefs were the mystical and eschatological concepts of worshippers of Dionysus/Bacchus, according to which the Nymphs that abducted the

32 Statius, *Silvae* 2.6.100.
33 Nock 1961.
34 Homer, *Odyssea* 23.333–336.
35 Euripides, *Andromacha* 1269; see Barringer 1995, 69–94.
36 Pindar, *Olympia* 2.28–30.

deceased became their partners in life on the fields of Elysium—the land of eternal happiness in the heavens, also frequently called the Ether. The abducted deceased thus became the guardians of their friends and family on earth. They were described as heroes or even virtual gods.[37] According to N.J. Richardson, the Hylas myth belonged to the same soteriological variety as the myth of the abducted-and-found Kore/Persephone, and therefore it was also analogous to the concept of death and resurrection.[38] We know from rare sources of a ritual that involved searching, calling and lamenting after Hylas; this ritual resembled the search for Kore.[39] Some scholars even see a direct link between Nymph cults, initiation rituals and mystery cults concerning Demeter and Persephone[40] on account of the role played by sacred springs in them.[41] F. Glaser studied numerous examples of tombs and hero cults (*heroa*) being located near springs. He assumed the location was directly connected with Nymphs and rejected the 'realistic' theory that the purpose was to supply the deceased with fresh water and attract numerous visitors to the spring. According to Glaser, the idea of abduction by Nymphs was important as a form of heroisation.[42] He points to an epigram by Alcaeus from the *Greek Anthology*, in which the Nymphs themselves buried Hesiod, washing him first in spring water and building his tomb:

> In a shady grove of Locris the Nymphs washed the
> body of Hesiod with water from their springs and
> raised a tomb to him. And on it the goat-herds
> poured libations of milk mixed with golden honey.

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37 Cumont 1922, 139–141; Cumont 1942, 'Additions', 502 ad p. 145; Cumont 1949, 208, 325–326; Schellenberg 2001, 104–105.

38 In favour of this interpretation, we could add that, according to some myths, it was the Nymphs who abducted Kore, Hani 1974, 218–219; Celoria 1992, 174, n. 301; Larson 1997, 136; Larson 2001, 68. In *Hymni Orphici* (51.3) they are described as χθόνιαι, the deities of vegetation. Perhaps such associations helped shape the tale of Hylas, Muthmann 1975, 94–95; see, however, Ricciardelli 2000, 429; for the chthonic aspect of Nymphs, Scullion 1994, 108–109.

39 Sourvinou-Inwood 2005, 74–80. For the parallels between the abductions of Hylas and Persephone, Gutzwiller 1981, 19–29; Hunter 1993, 40–41 (Zeus's agreement; the victim is abducted when he/she is a long way from his/her guardian; his/her screams are heard by bystanders, but not by the guardian himself/herself etc.).

40 Burkert 1966, 15; Richardson 1974, 181–182; Muthmann 1975, 101, n. 78.

41 Piccaluga 1974; Spaeth 1994, especially 80–82. For the cult of Nymphs, see also Segal 1981; Spaeth 1996, 137–138; for some possible Orphic interpretations, Herrero de Jáuregui 2010, 206–207.

42 Curtius 1858–1859, 175–176; Bober 1977; Glaser 1981–1982; Schefold 1982.

For even such was the song the old man breathed
who had tasted the pure fountains of the nine Muses.

(transl. W.R. Paton)[43]

Λοκρίδος ἐν νέμεϊ σκιερῷ νέκυν Ἡσιόδοιο
Νύμφαι κρηνίδων λοῦσαν ἀπὸ σφετέρων
καὶ τάφον ὑψώσαντο· γάλακτι δὲ ποιμένες αἰγῶν
ἔρραναν ξανθῷ μιξάμενοι μέλιτι·
τοίην γὰρ καὶ γῆρυν ἀπέπνεεν ἐννέα Μουσέων
ὁ πρέσβυς καθαρῶν γευσάμενος λιβάδων.

This privilege was bestowed upon the poet not because he was the first to extol the virtues of rural life[44] but because the Nymphs had recognised him as a hero. Glaser stresses that not only legendary heroes of the Archaic and Classical periods, but also 'ordinary' people of the Greco-Roman world were buried in this way. Their graves had a heroic character, making them quasi-*heroa*. To illustrate this phenomenon, he points to two epigraphic pieces of evidence. The first is a two-sided relief found near Dipylon (2nd century AD). On one side there is a partially preserved epitaph (starting with the words: αἱ νύμφαι δηλοῦσι), while the other side presents Nymphs.[45] The second item of evidence is a funerary inscription from Athens (2nd century AD) which speaks of a child buried near Nymphs:

I, Priskos, lost dear life
to my misfortune when I was seven,
it was then the causer of tears, Hades with the Erinyes, annihilated me
and I am concealed in this wretched tomb,
which was raised near Nymphs, from where [water] bedews the city of Athens,
so that my [name] may be declared to all now and in the future.[46]

[– ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – βίοτον] φίλον ὤλεσα Πρίσκος,
ἕβδομον [ἡνί]κ' ἔτος κακὸν ἤλυ[θε]· δὴ τότε γάρ με
δακρυόεις Ἀίδης σὺν Ἐρει⟨ν⟩[ύ]σιν ἠίστωσεν·
τύμβος δὲ στονόεις ὅδε [μ'] ἴσχει, ὅς ῥα τέτυκται
ἀγχοῦ Νυμφάων, ὅθεν ἄ[ρδεται] ἄστυ Ἀθήνης,
πᾶσιν ἀγγελέειν ⟨μ⟩ε παρο[ῦσί] [τ' ἐπ]εσσομένοις τ[ε].

Glaser also points to iconographic items that he believes depict Nymphs abducting the deceased to the other world. On an early Hellenistic relief

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43 *AP* 7.55.
44 Bloch 1902, 518.
45 *Kaibel EG*, no. 115; *Peek GV*, no. 1609; Stichel 1982; *SEG*(32), no. 323.
46 *Kaibel EG*, no. 162; *Peek GV*, no. 984; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 142; Glaser 1983, 179.

Figure 8. Votive relief from acropolis of Athens, 4th century BC.

in Naples Charites and Nymphs, holding hands, lead a small figure.[47] The relief is part of a tomb or a votive offering laid at a temple. It may have commemorated a deceased girl. A similar scene is presented on the so-called 'Charitenrelief' in Athens (end of the 4th century BC) (see fig. 8), which includes Nymphs leading a small boy.[48] Both reliefs show the heroisation of a child, which instead of descending into Hades, ascends to the land of the gods, i.e. they correspond to funerary epigrams which heroise those abducted by Nymphs.

C. Sourvinou-Inwood in turn believes the tradition of heroising individuals abducted by Nymphs dates back to Classical times. Its earliest extant evidence is supposed to be an inscription including the expression χαῖρε

[47] Richards 1890; Himmelmann-Wildschütz 1957a, 16–18; Gaifmann 2008.

[48] To Kontoleon 1970, 20–21, this interpretation presented by Himmelmann-Wildschütz seems almost unquestionable. For other possible interpretations, Feubel 1935, 16; Fuchs 1962; Edwards 1985; Larson 2001, 258–267; Comella 2002, 13–14. Regarding Hermes κουροτρόφος, see Hadzisteliou Price 1978, 128.

Ὕλα from the 5th or 4th century BC.[49] This is an epitaph for a youth called Hylas. The greeting expression suggests his heroisation and identification with the mythological Hylas.[50] Unfortunately, this theory cannot be verified because the expression χαῖρε had more than one meaning in epigrams and, despite Sourvinou-Inwood's assertions, such a greeting did not necessarily imply the heroic status of the addressee. One may have similar reservations regarding Glaser's theory. Bearing in mind that the sites of Greek cults were frequently situated near the sources of running water, finding *heroa* in such locations need not have had anything to do with the concept of heroisation as a result of being kidnapped by Nymphs.[51] In the epitaph for Priskos we probably have poetic description of the tomb being located near an aqueduct. The same concerns the supposedly special meaning of sacred springs in the Demeter cult. None of the aforementioned scholars has been able to identify any association between the theme of the deceased being abducted by Nymphs and a specific set of beliefs regarding the afterlife. That is why soteriological interpretations of this theme, and all the more so ones concerning mystery cults and initiations, should be rejected.

Κουροτρόφοι in the Afterlife

We therefore need to pursue a different course of inquiry. Significant indications as to how interpret the Nymph abducting theme in the funerary epigrams can be found on a particular sarcophagus. The so-called 'Hylas-sarkophag' in Rome from the second half of the 3rd century AD presents the abducting of Hylas by the Nymphs (see fig. 9). Here Hylas was probably being represented by the deceased, who was the master of a house and father of a family, as a result of which we see a very mature Hylas, and certainly not a boy. In his hand he holds a branch with leaves, suggesting a riverside scene. One of the abducting Nymphs in turn bears the facial features of the deceased's wife (no longer a young woman) and it is she who seems to be the most involved in what is happening.[52] The scene was probably

49 *IG*(2.2), no. 12837.

50 Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 200–201.

51 There is no trace of heroisation on a tomb of Apollo's priest, which was situated near the source of Nymphs, Milner 2000; see *SEG*(50), no. 1354 bis; *EBGR* 2003, no. 115.

52 Engemann 1973, 31 and pl. 11 c; Turcan 1978, 1719; Wrede 1981, 152 and no. 140 (in the catalogue); Guerrini 1982, 206, no. 55 (in the catalogue); Koch, Sichtermann 1982, 608–609; Zanker, Ewald 2004, 96–98 (pl. no. 80).

Figure 9. Abduction of Hylas by the Nymphs on a sarcophagus from Rome (Palazzo Matei), 2nd half of the 3rd century AD.

supposed to represent the union of husband and wife in eternity.[53] On either side there are two groups of male figures, not known to us from other Hylas myth iconography (a figure to the left of Hylas is probably Heracles, and one on his right could be Polyphemus[54]). The fact that the two male figures as well as the two Nymphs also clearly portrayed contemporaries allows us to assume that an entire family was represented here. This would mean that the Nymphs represented family members who had died earlier (one has the features of a boy), whereas the men seen searching for Hylas (led by Erotes with torches—the symbols of devotion and love) represented family members who were still alive. The tale of how Heracles had in futile desperation searched and called for his beloved Hylas was in that period also very well known, also in Rome.[55] This somewhat naïve and not entirely tasteful relief expressed despair, longing, regret and inability to come to terms with the loss of someone close, whereas at the same time it expressed hope in life after death and an ultimate reunion. The garland of flowers

[53] See Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argonautica* 1.1324–1325, where the Nymph has made him her husband.

[54] Preller 1972–1875(2), 840.

[55] Vergilius, *Georgica* 3.6: *Cui non dictus Hylas?*

carried by Heracles on the left side of the relief is probably an allusion to the traditional gathering of mourners over a grave, where they partook in a meal and reminisced about the departed. Thus the myth poetically served to show the feelings of the family without referring to specific views or doctrines regarding to the afterlife. Epigrams mentioning abductions by Nymphs referred to universally known myths and, as in the case of the Hylas sarcophagus, cannot be treated as evidence of any specific eschatology or form of heroisation.[56]

In one significant aspect the kidnapping of Hylas scene on the Rome sarcophagus seems to differ from epigrams speaking of the deceased being abducted by Nymphs. Like Ganymede, Hylas symbolised the beauty of youth.[57] The sarcophagus alludes to Hylas we know from mosaics and paintings: a bold hero and hunter, the symbol of masculine *virtus* which aroused the passions of the Nymphs.[58] Meanwhile funerary epigrams are virtually devoid of any eroticism. The epigram for Isidora refers to the Hylas myth even though in this case the Nymphs abduct a young girl. This different interpretation probably results from the fact that the epigrams referred to the deaths of young children.[59] In this respect the tomb in honour of Onezathe, who died by contemporary Greek standards as at least a middle-aged woman, was quite unique. All the tombs were for children or very young people. This observation allows us to better understand how the abduction-by-Nymphs theme functioned. In the myth as in literature Hylas was frequently presented as a small boy taken away by goddesses. They did not passionately embrace him in their arms, nor did they 'save' him, instead they simply gave him their tender, loving care. The most beautiful rendition of this version of the myth is provided by Theocritus, who clearly accentuated the caring aspect of the Nymphs.[60] This partly resulted from the very nature of these deities. According to myths, Nymphs had nursed Dionysus on Mount Nysa, Hermaphroditus, Zeus in Arcadia as well as Semele, Aeneas, the Centaurs and probably Minos (whom they were said to have fed with ambrosia). Nymphs were frequently described as the κουροτρόφοι, because they were

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56 Lancha 1984; Maaskant-Kleibrink 1987; Zanker, Ewald 2004, 97–98.

57 Martial, *Epigrammata* 7.15. That's why the name was popular among the performers of every kind, see s.v. Leppin 1992, 353; among gladiators, Robert 1940, 301; Guarducci 1935–1950(4), p. 375, n. 13.

58 Seneca, *Phaedra* 777–784: *turba licens, Naides improbae* [...] *lascivae deae.*

59 Larson 2001, 66–70.

60 See also *Peek GV*, no. 1159; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 101; *SGO*(1), no. 03/05/04; *SEG*(53.2), no. 1306. The motherly aspect of the Nymphs' love to Hylas was stressed by Segal 1981, 29–32, in striking contrast to the more erotic version of Apollonius.

engaged in the rearing of divine and human children. They also appeared in various kinds of genealogies as the mothers of eponymous heroes.[61] This characteristic of Nymphs was more important in funerary epigrams than any of their possible 'soteriological' aspects. Nevertheless, it is important to note that one aspect did not necessarily contradict the other. Children being cared for by Nymphs could be seen as an allusion to the theme of heroes being raised by foster parents, a theme commonly found in ancient myths. Such an adoption signified special status, divine care and being selected as a chosen one.[62] It is in this sense that the epigram for ten-year-old Proclus from Caesarea in Mauretania (1st century AD) should be understood. In the epigram the deceased boy states that he had lost the sweet light of life and any hope of living to old age. He offered up prayers to the merciful Nymph Nysa, who had fostered Dionysus, to grant him eternal youth. In other words, she was to look after him, and thus, in a sense, he was to take the place of Dionysus.[63] However, usually the main idea suggested is that prematurely deceased children were not abducted by the indifferent Hades or Moira, but by loving, caring goddesses, whose eternal love in the afterlife in a sense made up for the love the deceased had not experienced from their parents or in adult life.[64] In the epigram for Isidora her apotheosis came with a guarantee that she would want nothing in the afterlife, because in the home of her foster 'father' a profusion of food would be offered to the girl as gifts from the Nymphs who loved her.

We are therefore drawn to the conclusion that while those who had died young or in their prime were associated with myths of the abduction of Ganymede, Persephone or Adonis, i.e. myths accentuating the sensual beauty and attractiveness of the deceased, in the case of children the theme would rather concern abduction by caring Nymphs. Such a kidnapping suggested the child's beauty without any erotic undertones. This was a beauty of pure joy which goddesses reciprocated with loving care. Epigrams for various young children have similar psychological overtones. The deceased child usually became a favourite of the gods, for whom they were a source of joy. In one of the epigrams (Syros, 2nd–3rd century AD) Hermes abducted a boy who was loved by Pluto and Persephone, and this child was offered to

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61 Nilsson 1955–1961(1), 251; Hadzisteliou Price 1978, 126–127, 194; Muth 2000, 16; Sourvinou-Inwood 2005, 106–108.

62 For the Pythagorean/Neoplatonic, symbolic interpretation of the cave of Nymphs as the place of a privileged communion with the gods, Agosti 1994.

63 *SEG*(33), nos. 208 and 848; Vatin 1983; *BE* 1984, no. 528; Cole 1993, 290.

64 Huskinson 1996, 102–103.

Eubuleus and Persephone as a toy gift (ἄθυρμα: a toy, plaything, game or joy).[65] Another partly preserved epigram from Caesarea (1st century AD) speaks of a sort of secluded place in the afterlife which was the residence of deceased children (ἄωροι); there was no daemon that condemned the deceased child to the underworld, but a loving goddess who has taken it under her care and is now leading it to other ἄωροι (ἡγάγετ' εἰς ὁ[μοίους]).[66]

65 *Kaibel EG*, no. 272; *Peek GV*, no. 2030; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 59. In a poem of the *Greek Anthology* Hades has taken the life of a little child, who from now on will be a παίγνιον in the household of Persephone; back at home, only bitter despair remains, *AP* 7.483. The epigram in Peek 1964a, 500 (*SEG*[24], no. 484) demonstrates some kind of a reunion in the afterlife: the deceased mother is welcoming her daughter once she also has passed away, not long after her mother's demise.

66 Leveau 1983, 159–161; Vatin 1986, 110–114, no. 2.

CHAPTER SEVEN

OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS

Mythological Frame of Reference

It is easy to notice that myths and the protagonists of myths appeared in virtually all the epigrams I have discussed above; myths are even used to interpret the philosophical concept of Ether or the 'scientific' concept of catasterism. Naturally, the exegesis of themes, establishing the reasons as to why specific myths and images were used in a given funerary epigram and their actual nature, remains a moot subject (all the more so when considering the themes of funerary iconography). The vast majority of biblical and evangelical themes appearing in Christian funerary epigrams of Late Antiquity are easy to interpret in the context of the Christian doctrine of salvation. But there is no pagan equivalent of the Old and New Testament to refer to, nor was there any equivalent to the tradition of allegorical interpretation as was left to us by the Church Fathers. Here and there in pagan literature we may find snippets of information, but these rarely fit the context of eschatological symbolism and in no way form a cohesive system like the one which exists in the case of Church apologists and theologians.[1] However, this lack of information in Greek and Roman literature should not incline us to conclude that the eschatological aspect of funerary epigram themes could only stem from religious mystery cults. Let us look at the theme of the deceased being abducted by gods. Both Hylas and Ganymede could be seen as symbolising death and resurrection. Yet they basically had nothing to do with mystery cults. Neither Ganymede, nor still less Hylas were associated with myths best known for their soteriological meaning, such as those concerning the so-called dying gods, i.e. Adonis, Attis, Dionysus, Osiris[2] or Heracles.[3] Indeed, the latter were the most popular mythological figures to miraculously ascend to heaven. This is an important indication. From it we can conclude that hope in an afterlife did not have to be

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1 Turcan 1982.
2 References in Lancellotti 2002, 139–151.
3 Stafford 2005a; Stafford 2005b.

associated with, as is sometimes suggested, the influence of complex eschatological mysteries or religious groups. The same can be said with regard to catasterisms, or descriptions of the deceased as heroes or—as we saw in the epigram for Theophile—the myth of Persephone being kidnapped by Hades and her marriage in the underworld. It seems that such imagery was more widespread. Even in the case of myths strictly linked with mystery cults there was no simple correlation between any particular cult and the use of its positive eschatology in a given epigram. For example, the Dionysiac view of happiness after death in the form of joyous dancing among gods was not limited to those who had been initiated or followed a mystic doctrine.[4] We have to differentiate between the poetic clichés, conventional forms and more or less consciously selected themes as well as specific, developed, positive views on the afterlife[5] which did not necessarily have to be part of any universal, mystic eschatology such as Christian eschatology.[6] Examples of positive eschatology could result from individual opinions and hopes shared by no more than a small circle of family members and friends. But such epigrams should still be valued and analysed as an important source regarding the views of Ancient Greeks on the afterlife.[7] The application of specific myths in specific cases depended on individual circumstances. What do all these examples tell us as belonging to a specific category of funerary epigrams?

The Lessons of Sarcophagi

On several occasions I have referred to funerary reliefs, particularly ones on sarcophagi. These are a particularly useful type of historical source. They show how myths functioned in the Greco-Roman period; they help us understand what meaning was attached to them and how they were used in commemorating the dead and in the cults of the dead.[8] A famous book by the Catholic scholar F. Cumont and its review by A.-D. Nock came to

[4] Jaccottet 2003(2), 293 ad no. 180. And vice versa, an initiation into the mysteries was not tantamount to belief in the afterlife, see e.g. *Kaibel EG*, no. 588; *IGUR*(3), no. 1169; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 80; Jaccottet 2003(2), no. 195; *Peek GV*, no. 1144; *SGO*(1), no. 01/18/05; *Peek GV*, no. 974; *IGUR*(3), no. 1228; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 79; Cole 1993, 289–290; Jaccottet 2003(2), no. 186. See also MacMullen 1981, 49–62.

[5] Brandenburg 1967, 206.

[6] *SEG*(53.2), no. 2223.

[7] For similar considerations with regard to the Roman sarcophagi, Fabricius 1999, 75–76.

[8] Brilliant 1984, 124–165.

represent two opposite ways of interpreting them (though the dispute actually dates back to the conflict between Romanticism and Positivism). According to supporters of the mystery symbolism or Romantic school, mythical scenes on sarcophagi referred to the other world or to the fate of souls in the afterlife, thus expressing the religious or philosophical hope of resurrection after death, which, for various reasons, was not appropriately reflected in contemporary literature or even in funerary inscriptions.[9] The 'Romanticists' were also against trying to apply modern-day concepts of art for art's sake to ancient funerary art. Nevertheless, most publications on this subject (chiefly written by German scholars) are more inclined towards the rationalist, formalist or pragmatic approach. This is based on the assumption that the reliefs on sarcophagi were there for decorative purposes and devoid of deeper religious or eschatological thought. At most they symbolised the sophistication, culture or education of the deceased or the purchaser of the tomb. The 'Positivists' stressed the following: the myths presented on tombs also adorned the interiors of homes and everyday items; the followers of philosophical and mystic doctrines belonged to small, elite circles that had little effect on the rest of contemporary society; one cannot view people in antiquity from the Christian perspective and attribute to them an instinctive desire to break free of temporal bonds in order to achieve eternal life after death. Mythology was a universal culture code and language of Greco-Roman civilisation that pervaded all aspects of life in those times. Using such mythological symbols in respect to the loss of someone close was quite natural, not necessarily the result of any optimistic eschatology. Finally, from the methodological point of view and on account of gaps in our knowledge, the diversity and spreading of various religious cults, particularly in Greco-Roman times makes it virtually impossible to give an authoritative interpretation of the mythological symbolism presented on the sarcophagi.[10] The famous representative of this school, A.D. Nock, pointed to its decorative nature; it was more the effect of 'Kunstwollen', fashions, aesthetic conventions rather than any particular religious 'programme.' In his opinion, this also concerned funerary poetry per se, which could be characterised as something like the perfunctory use of *flosculi* in Classical poetry combined with the lack of logical sequence in themes: 'The writers put down anything that might sound and look

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9 Raeck 1987; Fittschen 1992.

10 Koortbojian 1995, 13–14. For short summary of the relevant research on the Roman sarcophagi Koch, Sichtermann 1982, 581–617; for Greek funerary art, Thimme 1967, 209; Stamatopoulu 2001.

impressive.'[11] Here one may add that in his synthesis of pagan eschatology F. Cumont devoted very little attention to the analysis of funerary epigrams, presumably because they were of no great philosophical worth and thus not within the main scope of his academic interests. With regard to Greek and Roman epitaphs, the 'Positivist' view was first and foremost represented by R. Lattimore, author of an important study, published the same year as Cumont's book.[12]

In recent years scholars have tried to reach a compromise on this issue. R. Tucan has drawn on Cumont's idea (in a modified form) to question the logic of a decorative-versus-symbolic alternative. After all, a given theme could perform a decorative function but at the same time also have a deeper, symbolic meaning; in specific cases both aspects could be present to varying degrees.[13] Other scholars in turn believe that certain images on Greco-Roman funerary altars, urns, sarcophagi and tombs expressed various sorts of eschatological optimism.[14] But at the same time they do not agree with Cumont's approach to Greco-Roman reliefs, which they regard as too abstract, 'systemic' and philosophical; an approach which tries too hard to see defined, metaphysical systems. Such an approach seems doubtful when the probable intention of the authors and recipients might have been a symbolic message in the purely poetical sense.[15] This revised eschatological interpretation states that in order to express the hope of achieving immortality, the authors and purchasers of funerary epigrams used set terms and concepts drawn from a broad repertoire of literature and mythology.[16] In the Greco-Roman period pagans generally assumed that nothing specific or certain was known about the afterlife, and at the same time they nur-

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[11] Nock 1946, 150.

[12] Lattimore 1942, 342; contra Robinson 1945.

[13] Turcan 1978.

[14] Colpe, et al. 1996, especially 304–309.

[15] Andreae 1963, 80–81, n. 445. This stance is perfectly summarised by Brenk 1993, 149: 'Cumont-like excess merits scepticism. But were the mysteries largely concerned with the mundane cares of this life rather than the more horrendous possibilities of the next? The newer methodology is strongly archaeological, sociological, and minimalist, far removed from Cumont's detection of afterlife symbolism everywhere and the use of later sources to interpret earlier phenomena. But not even a metempsychosisist dedicates an ex-voto for salvation received in the next life. [...] Early Imperial people had sharper eyes than we. Effortlessly they recognized astrological and eschatological allegory in famous authors, in architecture, and in sculpture, where we remain unperceptive or perplexed.'

[16] See e.g. *Kaibel EG*, no. 320; *Peek GV*, no. 1993; *TAM*(5.2), no. 1108; *SGO*(1), no. 04/05/07 and *Kaibel EG*, no. 634; *Peek GV*, no. 357; *IGUR*(3), no. 1300; some valuable points were made by Le Bris 2001, 94–95. Of course, those initiated in the mysteries could create such imagery as well, Dickie 2005, 46.

tured a hope that it would resemble as much as possible the lives of the gods and heroes. That is why, after the premature death of his son, the rhetorician Himerius consoled himself that his child had joined Eros (to play with), Hymenaios (for feasting), Branchos (for predicting the future) and Trophonios (for divine inspiration).[17] Wishing to add substance to such fluid and imprecise notions of the afterlife, they listed and compiled mythical *exempla*.[18] In effect we see on tombstones a whole series of mythological figures, symbolising happiness in the other world.[19] On a funerary stele for M. Valerius Speratus from Viminacium in Moesia (2nd century AD) there is a relief depicting the abduction of both Kore and Europe as well as Pollux and Castor.[20] A tomb from Tyre presents Psyche, the Sirens, Tantalus, Heracles and Alcestis, the kidnapping of Persephone, as well as the freeing of Hector, Heracles and Cerberus. Each individual myth on its own carried with it an eschatological teaching, yet taken together they could not constitute a comprehensive narrative.[21] Paintings in the Tomb of the Nasonii (Rome, Via Flamina, 2nd century AD, known to us from 17th-century reproductions) present: the abduction of Proserpina next to the figure of Hylas among the Nymphs; Mercury and Alcestis leading the deceased before the reigning couple of the underworld; Alcestis and Hercules before Admetus or Hercules bringing the Laodamia to Hades; Orpheus and Eurydice; Bellerophon with Pegasus and Hercules' ascension to Olympus. It is probable that in its entirety this complicated iconography (identification of some of the scenes and figures is indecisive) was supposed to show the departed returning from the world of the dead (i.e. evidence of life after death), descending into the underworld to appear before its rulers (and assuming that they would be graciously received), but also ascending to be among the stars, deities and Nymphs. Furthermore, there are hunting scenes, scenes of Hercules fighting with Antaeus, of Hercules and Cerberus, Oedipus before the Sphinx, of the Nymphs looking after Pegasus, the judgement of Paris as well as various beasts and winged figures. From this one may deduce that the purchaser of the tomb (as well as its viewers) may have doubted the reality of particular forms of personal identification with heroes and gods, as well as the

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17 Himerius, *Declamationes* 8.23 and the commentary ad loc. Völker 2003.

18 Blome 1978, 452–453. The research on the iconography of sarcophagi clearly shows this fluidity, as demonstrated by Turcan 1966, 5–11 on the Dionysiac sarcophagi, and Sichtermann 1970 on 'Meerwesensarkophage'.

19 Schefold 1976, 795.

20 Pilipović 2001–2002.

21 Cumont 1942, 508; Andreae 1963, 84–130.

traditional images of Charon, the ferryman, and the underworld. Nevertheless, the purchaser must have assumed that these mythological *exempla*, in a pictorial and symbolic way, expressed hope in life after death, heroisation and apotheosis. They all basically expressed one and the same idea. The deceased did not go to Tartarus, but instead could expect a happy life after death, one such as was enjoyed by the heroes and gods. The purpose of enumerating the various forms of heroisation and apotheosis was to express as vividly as possible this fundamental conviction. The myths, presented in succession, individually and as a whole, were merely symbols to bring to mind this one and only truth. But the objective was not to present a defined, systematic religious view.

Eschatology and Mythopoeia

Tentatively, one could assume that the authors of funerary epigrams also used this type of poetics to express hope of life after death. In an epitaph for the hunter Exakon of Itanos in Crete, from the 2nd–3rd century BC, the deceased faces the prospect of achieving immortality in the same way as the Dioscuri, recolling other examples of mortals being heroised, namely Minos and Heracles. This epitaph also includes an appeal for the Nereids to raise a lament in honour of Exakon.[22] A similar message is expressed in one of the few epigrams describing a happy existence of the deceased in the afterlife, one which has been preserved on a marble stele in Rome (3rd century AD):

> Prote, you have not died; you are gone to a better place
> and you live in the Islands of the Blessed,
> in great abundance; there, in the Elysian plain,
> you rejoice among the delicate flowers, away from all evil.
> Neither winter nor heat bring you sorrow;
> illness does not disturb you;
> you know neither hunger nor thirst.
> But you also have no longing for the life of humans.
> For you live blameless in pure light,
> indeed close to Olympus. (transl. A. Chaniotis)[23]

> οὐκ ἔθανες, Πρώτη, μετέβης δ' ἐς ἀμίνονα χῶρον
> καὶ ναίεις μακάρων νήσους θαλίῃ ἐνὶ πολλῇ,
> ἔνθα κατ' Ἠλυσίων πεδίων σκιρτῶσα γέγηθας

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[22] *Peek GV*, no. 1249.

[23] *Kaibel EG*, no. 649; *Peek GV*, no. 1830; *IGUR*(3), no. 1146; Cairon 2006; *EBGR* 2006, no. 24.

ἄνθεσιν ἐν μαλακοῖσι κακῶν ἔκτοσθεν ἁπάντων·
οὐ χειμὼν λυπεῖ σ', οὐ καῦμα, οὐ νοῦσος ἐνοχλεῖ,
οὐ πίνη σ', οὐ δίψος ἔχει σ', ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ποθεινὸς
ἀνθρώπων ἔτι σοι βίοτος· ζώεις γὰρ ἀμέμπτως
αὐγαῖς ἐν καθαραῖσιν Ὀλύμπου πλησίον ὄντως·

Here it can be clearly seen that for the purchaser or author of this epigram the specific name, idea or myth explaining how one paradise or another could be reached was of secondary importance. At the same time, the epigram appears to give poetic expression to a metaphysical hope. And in this case it seems probable that the same role was performed by individual myths, which were merely selected to suit a particular context. For example, the Ganymede myth was selected in case of a boy dying, and Persephone was selected when an attractive girl died.

The problem with this view is that it makes it very difficult to distinguish between a vague, unspecified 'hope for a better life after death' and the wish to emphasise the dignity of the deceased, the pathos of their death and the nurturing of their memory by using μυθοποίησις to include them in the living tradition of a myth.[24] Funerary epigrams and reliefs were instruments used to preserve remembrance of the past by providing a dramatised and intensified image and form. Thanks to myths, particular achievements and virtues of the deceased, ones by which they wanted to be remembered, acquired heroic proportions. In a sense, myths added text to the silent images of the dead, and gave them greater meaning. Thus the heroisation of the deceased could simply come down to mythologizing them. The citing of particular myths was to make the heroisation more concrete and tangible, whereas the immortality aspired to by the purchasers of epigrams would have been more in the 'social' or 'subjective' sense.[25] To give just two examples: the aforementioned epigram for the deceased Tineia Hygeia links a kidnapping by Pluto with a kidnapping by Naiads, even though they were associated with quite different prospects for life after death.[26] On a 3rd-century-AD fresco from the Octavii family tomb in Rome (to refer in turn to funerary art) we see the Kore abduction canon altered in such a way that the children are kidnapped by Amor, not Dis Pater, probably in order to show the young age of the deceased.[27]

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24 Blome 1992; Koortbojian 1995, 34–37, 125; Dimas 1998, 119.
25 Nock 1946, 166; see also Derderian 2001, 76–96.
26 *Kaibel EG*, no. 570; *Peek GV*, no. 1595; *IGUR*(3), no. 1344.
27 Wrede 1981, 151 and no. 275 in the catalogue.

The fact such myths, symbols, metaphors and *exempla* of heroisation were applied interchangeably means that what counted was not their actual meaning or plot, but rather their poetic form. In this case the common feature of many of the above cited epigrams concerning chosen ones being abducted by deities could equally well be the literary culture of the Second Sophistic. After all, the latter type of literature abounded with similar tales of love involving kidnappings and ending in happy marriage (those of Phaedrus, Achilles Tatius, Plutarch and Polemon).[28] In such literature there was a great fondness for protagonists to experience dramatic vicissitudes, for disappearances and kidnappings. In his novel *Chaereas and Callirrhoe*, Chariton recounts, how driven on by the desire to commit suicide, Chaereas goes to the grave of his beloved one to find that her body has disappeared. Chaereas then cries out to heaven, complaining that one of the gods, his rival in love, had abducted Callirrhoe for himself, and next realises that his wife is a goddess.[29] In this way 'eschatological' myths recited on tombs could be seen as simply a written equivalent of decorative reliefs.[30] A striking example of such a perfunctory use of myths is a Christian tomb inscription in Sakkaia (Arabia) from the 4th century AD which includes the equivalent of a Homeric sentence: Mary will take the souls of the dead to where the fair-haired Rhadamanthus lives.[31] Such phrases, therefore, were more or less randomly selected poetic metaphors; even if they were inconsistent and lacked cohesion, the authors of the epigrams or the purchasers of the tomb considered them to be of value and appropriate for the occasion.[32] For example, an epigram from Egypt states that the deceased lives in the dark home of Pluto and Persephone, while at the same time he is a companion of Minos among the pious.[33] In another epigram, also from Egypt, the deceased is presented bound for the Ether, which is for some reason near Lethe (probably the personification of forgetfulness rather than the river in the underworld), while at the same time it states that all people will end up in Hades.[34] Here the author clearly contradicts himself. A similar collection of

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[28] Evans-Grubbs 1989, 70–71.

[29] Chariton, *De Chaerea et Callirrhoe* 3.3.

[30] Pfohl 1983, 490.

[31] *Peek GV*, no. 1983; *SGO*(4), no. 22/21/01; Lougovaya 2005. Another striking example is *MAMA*(10), no. 275; *SGO*(3), no. 16/32/04.

[32] Waelkens 1983, 270. For the contradictions of this kind, Pfohl 1983, 490; see also Welles 1941, 90–91; Vérilhac 1978(2), 256–259; Brown 2005. For some parallel examples in literature, Garland 1985, 76, 171, n. 119.

[33] *Peek GV*, no. 699; Bernand 1969, no. 3.

[34] Bernand 1969, no. 81.

incongruous ideas is found in an epigram on a framed 2nd-century-AD tablet from Soada-Dionysias (today Soueida/Suweida) in Syria:

> Sleep has overcome you, blessed, beloved, divine Sabinus,
> and like a hero, you are not dead. You sleep
> as well as in your lifetime, among the trees, in between the graves.
> The souls of really pious people never die.[35]

> Ὕπνος ἔχει σε, μάκαρ, πολυήρατε, δῖε Σαβῖνε,
> καὶ ζῇς ὡς ἥρως, καὶ νέκυς οὐκ ἐγένου·
> εὕδεις δ' ὡς ἔτι ζῶν ὑπὸ δένδρεσι σοῖς ἐνὶ τύμβοις·
> ψυχαὶ γὰρ ζῶσιν τῶν ἄγαν εὐσεβέων.

Sleep here means the true life, i.e. the life of a hero. This strange statement may be partly explained by an idea held by the Greeks, namely that the soul leaves the body during sleep. By freeing itself from the body and its limitations it could travel among the spirits and speak with the dead, regardless of time and space. The soul could even reach the end of the universe. If death meant eternal sleep, it also carried with it this sort of freedom. This was an essentially optimistic view, for accordingly our life was but a brief vigil between two eternities, and that sleep-bringing death constituted some sort of liberation. Yet in this epitaph the life of the hero is identified with a specific body resting in a cemetery, in human sleep. It seems that the only thing important here was the poetry, and that formerly (perhaps) concrete concepts and ideas had by then become mere literary adornments.

The Beauty and Youth of the Dead in Verse-Inscriptions

Surely, soteriology was not a common denominator of the category of epigrams we have been dealing with. It seems to me that in order to understand their nature, we need to take into account a theme that is closely associated with most of the myths, mythical figures and concepts which appeared throughout this book. It seems also, that it has not yet been properly examined in the context of funerary epigrams. This theme is the beauty of the deceased, which was an important element of funerary poetry, particularly in the Greco-Roman period, and, as we shall see, played an important role in the epigrams that interest us. Its origins and history, in truth, date back to a much earlier period and, therefore, in order to properly understand the later

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[35] *Kaibel EG*, no. 433; *Peek GV*, no. 1484; *SGO*(4), no. 22/36/03.

transformations, we need to look at the very beginnings of Greek funerary poetry. Thus, the next two chapters constitute parenthesis before we come back to our category of epigrams.

In the Archaic Period beauty was primarily expressed in the actual tomb as a substitute for the beauty of the deceased.[36] The epigram was only one of the elements of the beauty of the tomb as a whole. Undoubtedly, this was to a large extent the result of the specific function of funerary poetry in that age. The vast majority of funerary epigrams adorned the opulent tombs of aristocrats (unlike in the Classical age and later, when epigrams appeared on those of far more humble individuals), which were also decorated with images of the deceased in the form of reliefs, statues and/or paintings. It is for this reason that the epigrams frequently also referred to the beauty of the tomb itself.

The early epigrams relatively rarely referred to the beauty of the deceased directly.[37] Instead an important element of this poetry was an indirect allusion to the looks of the departed by evoking their young age, something which was considered synonymous with the attractiveness of youth. Of great significance here was the fact that funerary epigrams were written for a select few, probably not only on account of their high economic and social status but also due to some very specific circumstances of death. The epigrams frequently stated that the deceased were very young and that their deaths were premature. The problem most often rests with the lack of concrete information regarding the deceased's life story (something that only started being featured more frequently in epigrams of the Classical period). Rarely do we find specific details, such as: death in a war, dying far from their native land, during a sea voyage or during birth. Nevertheless, we are still entitled to assume that those mentioned in funerary epigrams lost their lives in tragic or extraordinary circumstances. No doubt, many concerned children or very young adults, while other adults who had died childless, or whose adult children had predeceased them. Virtually no epigrams from the Archaic Period mention those who had died in old age.[38] In other words, we are frequently dealing with parents building tombs for their children, when normally it should have been the other way round. Scholars studying Athenian tombs from the Archaic Period, surprised that contrary to expectations

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[36] Ecker 1989, 138–144. See e.g. *Peek GV*, no. 164; *CEG*(1), no. 161. Regarding the beauty of tombstones constituting a substitute for the deceased, Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 143–147; Byers 1998, 106, 116–120, 128–129; Steiner 2001, 214–218.

[37] Robertson 2002.

[38] Lougovaya 2004, 30–31, 79, 144.

there were fewer tombs built by children for parents than those built by parents for children, assume that those who died late in life were buried without any special distinctions, e.g. in family graves.[39] At least in this period funerary poetry was predominantly written for the prematurely deceased. In the Classical period tombs were built for the deceased of all age groups, though it would seem more frequently for males than for females.[40] These are important factors which show just how difficult it is to explain the motives for producing a developed, poetic epitaph and monument. It was not a simple manifestation of wealth and social status. In some cases the specific attitude of the purchaser of the tomb towards the prematurely deceased was especially significant. No doubt, those who died without leaving children of their own to preserve the memory of the parent were considered to need such special monuments, while their relatives deserved a particular sense of compassion, something that funerary poetry also frequently appealed for.[41] We know that for the Greeks preserving the memory of the deceased for future generations was extremely important. A poem in honour of the deceased was by its very nature created to be remembered, and thus its subject, the prematurely deceased, would be remembered. After all, such people had no offspring to preserve their memory.[42] Not infrequently such tombs were built for several family members, but the epigram would usually concern only one member, the one who had died young.[43]

It is interesting that in epigrams from the Archaic Period the word καλός, 'beautiful,' 'fine' was sometimes used in reference to the burial, the monument or the actual deceased, whereas in Classical times it was used much less often.[44] It was only towards the end of the Classical period that the word, used in reference to the physical beauty of the deceased, became one of the most characteristic themes in Greek funerary poetry. In Hellenistic and Greco-Roman times it was not infrequently used to emphasise the beauty of those who had died young.[45] Most often it appeared in reference to children,

39 Gutscher 1890(1), 7–8; Gardner 1896, 111; Lougovaya 2004, 30–31.

40 Breuer 1995, 48–49.

41 The same applies to funerary gifts and sacrifices; this is expressed clearly in *CEG*(1), no. 138, see McGowan 1995, 621–622; Byers 1998, 133–134, and in *SGO*(3), no. 16/33/02.

42 This 'compensation' theory is still discussed, pro Humphreys 1980, especially 104–105 and Himmelmann 1999, 12–19; contra Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 140–297; Bergemann 1997; D'Onofrio 1998; Calkins 2010, 235–236.

43 *CEG*(1), no. 95; ibidem(2), nos. 473, 477 (= *Peek GV*, no. 540), 485 (= *Peek GV*, no. 697).

44 Lougovaya 2004, 48. Ἀγλαΐα for a grave see Bousquet 1974.

45 Sartre-Fauriat 2001(2), 165–166, 217.

boys and girls,[46] and, somewhat less usually, in reference to women.[47] For women it was more common to stress moral virtues (σωφροσύνη, ἀρετή etc). If a woman's beauty was mentioned, it was more often than not expressed in very general terms. Their figure (εἶδος, μορφή) would be described as attractive or beautiful, or reference was simply made to the χάρις, κάλλος, καλός, καλλοσύνη, ἥβη, ἡλϊκία and ἀγλαΐα of the deceased. Sometimes the epigram stressed that this beauty was not a physical one, as is well illustrated on a stele from Athens (3rd–4th century AD):

> O friend, have a look at the hallowed beauty of the immortal soul
> and of the body of Asclepiodote, for nature bestowed pure beauty in both.
> (Even) if Fate snatched her away, it did not overpower her, because when she died,
> she did not die alone. Neither has she left her husband (for good),
> even though she did leave him; she now watches him all the more from heaven,
> rejoicing and keeping watch over him. (transl. E. Sironen)[48]

> ᾿Ασκληπιοδότη[ς] ἱερόν, φίλẹ, δέρκεο κάλλος
> ψύχης ἀθανάτης καὶ σώματος· ἀμφοτέροῒς γὰρ
> ἓν φύσις ὤπασε κ̣[ά]λ̣λ̣ος ἀκήρατον· εἰ δέ ἑ μοῖρα
> ἥρπασεṿ, οὐκ ἐδάμα[ς]σε· θανοῦσα γὰρ οὐ θάνε μούνη
> οὐδὲ πόσιν προέλο[ι]πε καὶ εἰ λίπε, νῦν δ' ἔτι μᾶλλον
> οὐρανόθεν μϊν ὁρᾶι καὶ τέρπεται ἠδὲ φυλάσσει.

Beauty was often mentioned as part of a whole list of the deceased woman's virtues, but then it did not stand out from her other attributes.[49] For example, the deceased καλή Flavia Charis, whose name was supposed to have been granted to her by the Charites, was described as a model for all worthy wives who loved their husbands (καλῶν ὑπόδειγμα φιλάνδρων).[50] Beauty could also simply mean idealising the deceased by comparing her with various goddesses (e.g. the Charites), mythological figures and flowers, though this kind of poetry appeared later, particularly in the time of the Roman Empire.[51] In some epigrams, ones which resembled love poetry, words expressing the

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46 Vérilhac 1978(2), 35–42.

47 Arrigoni 1981, 260, n. 16.

48 *Kaibel EG*, no. 174; *Peek GV*, no. 1282; Sironen 1997, no. 99. See also *AP* 7.695; *Peek GV*, no. 617. In the final lines of *Peek GV*, no. 643; Bernand 1969, no 42, the beauty of the deceased Arsinoe's soul and the purity of her body is emphasised. See also *AP* 7.599 and 695.

49 See e.g. *Peek GV*, no. 924; *SGO*(3), no. 16/31/81.

50 *Peek GV*, no. 1404; Sartre-Fauriat 2001(2), 217; *SGO*(4), no. 22/36/01, to be included in *IGLS*(16.1), no. 345.

51 Bernand 1969, 37–38; Pircher 1979, 46–47.

deceased woman's purely physical virtues were given special prominence.[52] On a stele from Athens (2nd–4th century AD) a husband praised his wife as follows:

> Once the gold of her hair she would proudly wear,
> her Charis' gaze shined brilliantly,
> her snow-white face and cheeks brightened,
> and the sweetest mouth uttered the most delicate of sounds,
> through ivory teeth and scarlet lips.
> To the beauty of [her] body she added all sorts of virtues;
> Such [a child] the attractive Kilikia bore for Eutychides.
> In the earth here rests twenty-five-year-old Tryphaera.
> This tomb was raised by Hermeros, [born] to the father Aristomachos and the mother Orphe,
> out of love for his wedded wife.[53]

> ἡ ποτὲ κυδιόωσα ξανθαῖς ἐπὶ κρατὸς ἐθίραις
> καὶ χαριτοβλεφάροις ὄμμασι λαμπομένη
> χιονέοις τε πρέπουσα προσώποις ἠδὲ παρειαῖς
> καὶ γλυκεροῦ στόματος ὄπα λιριόεσσαν ἱεῖσα
> χίλεσι πορφυρέοις ἐλεφαντινέων δι' ὀδόντων
> παντοίην τε ἀρετὴν περικαλλεῖ σώμα[τ]ι θεῖσα,
> ἣν τέκεν Εὐτυχίδῃ Κιλικία χαρ[ιτ]ῶπις,
> εἰκοσιπενταετὴς Τρυφέρα τῇδ' ἐν χθονὶ κ[εῖται]·
> Ἑρμέρως δὲ Ἀριστομάχοιο πατρὸ[ς] καὶ μητέ[ρος – ᴗ]
> μνῆμ' ἀλόχῳ φιλίῃ θήκατο κουριδίῃ.

The theme of beauty appears less frequently in the case of males who died young. For them it was more frequent to use the aristocratic epithet καλός for 'noble', 'honourable,' which could nevertheless also refer to purely physical virtues.[54] There was also no shortage of cases where the deceased was compared to mythological models of beauty. An interesting example of this is an epigram from Miletupolis or Cyzicus (from towards the end of the Hellenistic epoch), which in a peculiar way expresses the despair of the bereaved father and the unjust fate of his son, Asclas.[55] Kidnapped by Hades and brigands and held as a 'victim,' the deceased youth possessed a beauty comparable to that of Homer's Nireus.[56]

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[52] Jax 1933, 141–143; Häusle 1980, 87–88, n. 189; 119–120, n. 267. For χάρις in funerary epigrams, Bernand 1969, 198.

[53] *Kaibel EG*, no. 169; *Peek GV*, no. 746.

[54] Rife 1999, 122. Of course, the term καλός could be perfectly neutral in this sense, see e.g. *SGO*(4), no. 21/12/02.

[55] *Peek GV*, no. 1728; *SGO*(2), no. 08/05/02. See also *SEG*(35), no. 1026.

[56] A Homeric hero, second only to Achilles in beauty among the Greeks.

Polyfunctional and Polysemantic Beauty

Extolling the beauty and youthful attractiveness of the deceased in the Greco-Roman period served miscellaneous purposes which cannot be summed up as simple idealisation. In some exceptional cases the emphasis on physical virtues was dictated by specific circumstances, e.g. the deceased's profession. It is sufficient to cite one example, an epitaph from Attaleia/Antalya in Pamphylia (2nd century AD) for the gladiator Miletos, whose beauty was comparable to that of Adonis hunting or Hyacinth when he was struck by a discus.[57] From the practical point of view, stressing the beauty of the deceased was dictated by the fact that a premature death made it impossible for them to achieve any other form of glory; there was nothing of merit that such young people could be praised for.[58] Mythical, heroic stylisation of the deceased was a substitute for what alternatively could have been a catalogue of virtues and achievements attributed to a mature or elderly citizen (regardless of whether these virtues and achievements had anything to do with reality). This was especially the case with regard to very youngest adolescents and children.[59] But above all the extolling of beauty in epigrams was treated as an equivalent to preserving the beauty of the deceased in the form of funerary reliefs or statues. It was a means of emphasising the enormous loss experienced by family and friends.[60] As a physical image or a poem, the beauty and youth of the deceased were to attract the attention of passers-by and thus preserve the memory of those who could not have their own descendants.[61] They could also serve to comfort the family of the deceased. An epigram on a sarcophagus from Aquae Sextiae (Aix en Provence, France, 3rd century AD) states that the monumental tomb was installed to comfort the mother, who wanted to remember her son's features.[62] An epigram on a marble slab from Halicarnassus (Bodrum in Turkey, 2nd–3rd century AD) states that Salvius, the son of Aristeides, can be seen as an artistically crafted stone figure, untouched (ἐκτὸς ἐὼν) by tears:

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[57] *Peek GV*, no. 815; *SGO*(4), no. 18/12/02. See also the grave of an actor, described as πάντα καλός, *Peek GV*, no. 1809; *SGO*(2), no. 10/06/09; similarly a female singer, *Peek GV*, no. 1938; *IGUR*(3), no. 1305.

[58] *SEG*(38), no. 754 and ibidem(44), no. 667.

[59] Wrede 1981, 52; Hoffmann 1992, 340.

[60] See the paradigmatic, early example in *Kaibel EG*, no. 1a, on p. 517; *Peek GV*, no. 1223; *CEG*(1), no. 68.

[61] Hoffmann 1992, 344–346.

[62] *Kaibel EG*, no. 590; *Peek GV*, no. 735; *IGUR*(3), no. 1316; Walker 1990, no. 26. See the related testimonies, *Peek GV*, no. 1836 and *Kaibel EG*, no. 682; *Peek GV*, no. 1478; *IGUR*(3), no. 1273 and perhaps *Kaibel EG*, no. 406; *SGO*(3), no. 14/07/06.

> Thus Salvius, son of Aristeides, here artistically
> crafted in stone, free of tears and painful despair;
> indeed, amid the gaiety and sweet sounds carried by *auloi*,
> [his] figure in beautiful stone extends lustre among the people.[63]

> ⟨Σ⟩ά[λ]ουιος Ἀριστείδου λιθοδαίδαλο[ς]
> ἔνθα τέτευκται : ἐκτὸς ἐὼν δακρύων καὶ λυποτόκων ὀδυνάων·
> καὶ γὰρ ἐν εὐφρασίαις καὶ αὐλῶν ἥδεσι φωναῖς :
> δωμηθείς, ἀνέλαμψε βροτοῖς λιθοκαλλέα μορφήν.

It does not matter whether this is in reference to a no longer existing statue of the deceased or to a scene on a relief (most likely the so-called 'hero's feast,' including servants and musicians, or perhaps a special feast, as prescribed in a testament, to honour the deceased). In both cases we are dealing with consolation, the soothing of pain and despair by evoking the beauty of the deceased. Such solace was more than merely a matter of poetic effect, as is testified by a recently discovered prose text inscribed on a stele, a decree of association (Ἔδοξεν τῶι κοινῶι) of the heroic cult (ἡρωϊστῶν), issued on account of the death of the priestess Stratonike (Lydia, 2nd century BC).[64] It states that the honours offered to the deceased priestess, together with her image in a *heroon*, were to help the sons bear the loss of their mother. This decree names a special day in honour of the deceased, calls for her body to be crowned with a gold wreath and for her portrait to be installed in the *heroon*. It also records the decision for a delegation to be sent to her sons, Harpalos and Athenodoros, so that they would be informed of the honours conferred on their mother and of her ἀποθέωσις.

The Meaning of True Beauty, the Sense of Divine Abduction

There is a certain distinction to be made between the direct, albeit usually restrained, praise of the deceased's physical virtues and the eulogising of eternal beauty of the deceased who was abducted by infatuated deities. Throughout this book we have explored a specific type of epigram that referred to the physical desirability of the deceased, relating it to the world of deities or heroes, i.e. 'religious' or 'eschatological' epigrams which described the fate of the deceased in a more expanded and far from mundane form. As we have seen, in the Hellenistic period, and more especially in

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63 *Peek GV*, no. 616; Brandenburg 1967, 221, n. 83; *SGO*(1), no. 01/12/21.

64 Malay, Herrmann 2007, no. 96; Jones 2008; *EBGR* 2007, no. 66, on pp. 302–303. For ther examples of statues erected for the purpose of consolation, Strubbe 1998, 59–60, n. 46; 64, n. 53; of herms Galdi 1930, 319, n. 1; for the Roman counterparts, Koortbojian 2005, 293–297.

the Greco-Roman period various forms of specific, poetic heroisation of the deceased became increasingly widespread. The deceased were presented as eternally young heroes, oblivious of old age and death (hence the increasingly widespread use of the word ἥρως on tombs and the increased importance of youth as an aspect in hero cults of the deceased), as stars shining with an eternal brightness in the heavens (the catasterism of the deceased and the entry of the souls of the dead into the Ether), or as the ones chosen by the gods, abducted by them to their home in the heavens or married to them in the other world (identifying the kidnapping of the deceased with the abductions of Ganymede, Adonis, Hylas and Persephone). Taking into account the diverse origins and contexts of particular ideas and myths used in verse-inscriptions, as well as the diverse forms of poetry, eschatological visions and intended addressees, their only common feature is praise of the deceased's beauty. This phenomenon was most forcefully expressed in the most numerous group of such epigrams, the ones which stated the deceased had been abducted by deities. If we consider the normally liberal praise of the deceased's character and achievements in contrast with the usual reticence in emphasising their physical appearance,[65] then the explicitly erotic appeal of the departed in these epigrams is quite striking. All the more so because it is an attractiveness that even the gods cannot resist and which practically results in the 'rape' of the deceased.

What's more, it seems to me that a similar phenomenon can be observed in a larger category of Greek epitaphs and funerary epigrams. It is symptomatic that already in the Classical period we see the deceased being repeatedly 'rejuvenated' or 'ephebolised' by being called καλοί.[66] The term καλός did not necessarily mean the deceased was truly beautiful in his/her lifetime or had actually died young; in fact it was with time expanded to refer to various other types of deceased.[67] The fundamental idea was that the elderly had undergone the shame of losing god-like youth and beauty. The young, on the contrary, were regarded paradigmatically beautiful, since the youthful human body does not yet show signs of age, wear and decay, that is of mortality.[68] Violent and premature deaths were seen as a sign that it was beauty which caused the deceased to be abducted and/or even married by an infatuated deity, and it was for this reason that other, 'ordinary'

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[65] Pfohl 1983, 484–485.

[66] See e.g the curious invocation καλοῖς δαίμοσιν, *IG*(14), no. 813; Miranda 1995, no. 175.

[67] Ferri 1938, nos. 123–148. For the parallel phenomenon of 'eroticising' the dead on Fayum portraits, Montserrat 1993.

[68] Jantzen 2004, 61.

deceased ones, though neither young nor attractive, were also presented as young and beautiful. In other words, καλός could be taken to mean 'abducted one,' ἁρπασάμενος, ἁρπασθείς and vice versa.[69] Death could be associated with a violent, 'erotic' abduction even if the deceased had been old and ailing. Like the notion of beauty, so too the notion of the deceased dying 'young'[70] was not infrequently a matter of poetic licence.[71] For example, an epigram from Athens (4th century BC) for Hegilla, the daughter of Philagros, mentions only the name of the father, even though from the text it transpires that the deceased's husband was still alive.[72] The intention here was to stress the tragedy of the premature death and the paradox of the father burying the child rather than the other way round. Even someone in their late 20s could be described as ἀρτιφυής ('only starting to flower' or 'newly grown').[73] The fact that children who had died below the age of two were hardly ever called ἄωροι, 'prematurely deceased,' even though here the term was most applicable, is especially telling when we consider how frequently it was applied to deceased adults (and in one case even a woman aged 73)![74]

At the same time funerary epigrams commonly used terminology suggesting abductions by deities. The most frequent verb was ἁρπάζω and its various forms (ἀναρπάζω, ἀφαρπάζω, συναρπάζω). In some cases the term 'kidnapping' was simply used as a euphemism for death, as in 'pass away,'[75] Its use was so universal that providing a context, i.e. naming the divine kidnapper, was often considered superfluous. The best example of this is a dedication from Podmol in Macedonia (Pelagonia), dating to the 3rd century AD, to a deceased woman, which states that she was abducted to (or by) the blessed (ἐκ μερόπων μακάρεσσιν ἀναρπαχθεῖσαν) but fails to mention any other details concerning her death:

> Analempsis, her mother, and Aphrodito, her sister,
> the slaves of Aphrodite, dedicated the image of Ariste,

69 Ferri 1938, 122, 131–132, 155.

70 See *Peek GV*, no. 768; *SGO*(1), no. 05/02/02 and Schmidt 1991, 142–144 for the young age as the premise of heroisation.

71 Karusos 1961, 27–29; see also Collard, Cropp, Lee 2001, 213, 244; Bremmer 2002, 7–8.

72 *Peek GV*, no. 1790; *CEG*(2), no. 590; Clairmont 1970, no. 56; Rahn 1986, 203–204, n. 53.

73 *Peek GV*, no. 1917; *SGO*(1), no. 05/03/05, see Peek 1976a, p. 78. See also *Peek GV*, no. 936.

74 Byers 1998, 108. For the term ἄωρος denoting individuals of different age, *SEG*(51), no. 2088.12 and Horbury, Noy 1992, 106.

75 *Peek GV*, no. 1066 ἥρπασμαι (l. 4, app. crit. Hiller von Gaertringen); see also *SEG*(11), no. 865 (Φιλουμένης τὸ κάλλος ἡρπάγθη τάχος) and *Peek GV*, no. 1043; *IGUR*(3), no. 1373 (ἡρπάσθην ὁ π̣[ρό]μοιρος) and *IK*(16.6), no. 2109; *SGO*(1), no. 03/02/64 (ἀφαρπασθεῖσα) etc.

> who has been taken from among the mortals to [or by] the Blessed: for the Kytherean goddess has wished that Ariste shares the temple with her
> (transl. A. Chaniotis)[76]

> ἄνθεσαν αἱ δμωαὶ δῶρον προτέραις ᾿Αφροδίτης
> ἐκ μερόπων μακάρεσσιν ἀναρπαχθεῖσαν ᾿Αρίστην,
> μήτηρ ᾿Ανάλημψις καṣιγνήτη δ᾿ ᾿Αφροδιτώ·
> αὐτῇ γὰρ σύνναον ἔμεν Κυθέρεια θέλησεν.

It seems that such a passive meaning of this verb should be defined in lexicography, and above all in the *LJS*. The same concerns the word ἁρπαστός.[77] Literally translated as 'abducted by death' it should rather be taken to simply mean 'deceased.' The word ἁρπάζω suggests the use of violence (as it normally means to abduct, capture, kidnap, but also to tear away, plunder and rob; whereas ἁρπακτός means stolen), yet at the same time it suggests abruptness (as in ἁρπάγδην, which means: abruptly or hurriedly).[78] Some epigrams seem to accentuate the violent abruptness of death by repeating the word ἁρπάζω.[79] When ἁρπάζω was used in the context of abduction for sexual gratification, its meaning was close to our word for rape.[80] Yet the Greek language did not have a special word for rape and therefore the noun ἁρπαγή could mean rape even when no explicitly sexual context was given. When discussing the above funerary epigrams this significant fact should be very clearly understood: ἁρπαγή was a word that could suggest rape. As a matter of fact this phenomenon was recognised in research of ancient Greek and Greco-Roman funerary art, where the theme of young and beautiful victims being kidnapped was so widespread that some scholars have deemed it to be a method of 'sexualising' death. E. Vermeule wrote a well-known work, provocatively entitled 'The Pornography of Death.'[81] J. Bayet, in his outline

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[76] *IG*(10.2.2), no. 178, and Portefaix 1988, 93–94; *EBGR* 1999, no. 181, on p. 394. See also ἡρπάσθην in *Kaibel EG*, no. 414; *Peek GV*, no. 1090; Bernand 1969, no. 73; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 197.

[77] See *LJS Supplement* s.v. For ἁρπάγιμον used in this sense see *IK*(29), no. 89. Even in such a context the term could keep its literal meaning, see *BE* 1970, no. 644; *SEG*(25), no. 1068 and 1069; Vérilhac 1972; *BE* 1973, no. 508; Merkelbach 1973b; Zeller 2003.

[78] Horsley, Llewellyn 1981–2002(7), no. 152.

[79] See e.g. *Peek GV*, no. 1275; *IG*(10.2.1), no. 628 and fragmentary *SGO*(4), no. 18/16/10 (ἥρπασε used twice); *Kaibel EG*, no. 226; *Peek GV*, no. 967; *SGO*(1), no. 03/06/02. Similar poetics appear in a consolatory decree, *IG*(12.7), no. 410; Strubbe 1998, 60, no. 2; 66. In *SGO*(1), no. 04/16/03 both διεξήγαγε and ἥρπασε are used. For some parallels in the *Greek Anthology*, Small 1951, 52.

[80] Sowa 1984, 121–144; DeBloois 1997; Byrne 1997, 159, n. 23; Provencal 2005, 95, 102. For some reasons *LSJ Supplement* s.v. gives 'ἁρπαγή: for "rape" read "forcible abduction."'

[81] Vermeule 1979, 145; Keuls 1985, 47–55 ('Cult of rape'); Vernant 1991; Cohen 1996; Burton 2005.

of themes appearing on Roman sarcophagi, stressed that the most popular theme was what he termed as 'abductions' ('enlèvements').[82]

It is, however, important to underscore that the statement that a person had been abducted by a given deity (or just 'abducted,' without any further details being given) was usually a euphemistic way of stating death and carried with it no specific visions of the afterlife. A kidnapping by Hades or even by Moira did not define the fate of the deceased after death and it did not consign them to a gloomy existence in the underworld. For example, in an epigram from Egypt in the 2nd century AD the deceased Apollo was abducted by Hades, but later lived in happiness, serving Osiris.[83] Even with the 'negative' prospect, i.e. one of existence in Hades, the actual abduction could also be positive, for it was also a way of honouring the deceased. One of the best examples of this is an epigram from Naxos (first half of 2nd century BC) in which a 'daemon' did not take the deceased when he was dodging rapidly fired arrows (a somewhat gauche way of stressing his courage), but instead he was kidnapped by Tyche from his own home and taken by her to Hades.[84] Diverse views of death in the form of being abducted or kidnapped by superhuman, daemonic or divine forces could on the one hand be a typically Greek tendency to creatively mythologise reality, but on the other hand it could also be an attempt to euphemistically describe events that were difficult for humans to consciously accept.[85] With the exception of cases of murder, epitaphs rarely referred directly to dying and death. Things were not called by their real name. Accepting that the deceased had fallen victim to evil, enemy forces basically meant that death could be understood, made conscionable and somehow become more familiar. Abduction by a deity gave poetic expression to the abruptness of death, accentuated the innocence, young age and beauty of the victim, and at the same time (not necessarily with conscious intention) was a form of consolation. Even if it carried no promise of happiness after death, it was somehow more attractive than the impersonal, dismal notion of being taken away by the Moirai. It is significant that basically no terminological distinction was made between the negative or positive aspect of the abduction. Therefore, when an epitaph

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82 Bayet 1922–1923, 228–229; see also Turcan 1978, 1730. For the reliefs on Roman urns presenting such scenes, Picard 1940, 100 and notes 6–7.

83 *Kaibel EG*, no. 414; *Peek GV*, no. 1090; Bernand 1969, no. 73; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 197. Similar cases include *SGO*(4), no. 18/18/01 and *Peek GV*, no. 1155; Vérilhac 1978(1), no. 95 (corrections *BE* 1988, no. 32, on p. 306) and *Kaibel EG*, no. 250; *Peek GV*, no. 848; *CIRB*, no. 124.

84 *Peek GV*, no. 1815.

85 Pfohl 1983, 472–473.

or epigram referred to death as a result of being carried off by a deity, words such as ἁρπάζω were used, regardless of whether the fate of the deceased was more usual, i.e. destined for Hades, or whether it resulted in much rarer distinction of apotheosis or heroisation. Thus this verb as such had a certain ambivalence, but its meaning could, more often than not, be definitely positive. It is not by chance that it was used in Greek literature in reference to the carrying away of chosen mortals (Achilles, Asclepius, Dionysus) by gods and goddesses, in other words, in reference to their heroisation or apotheosis.[86] It was also in this sense that it appeared on a number of tombs, where it signified the deceased being taken up to heaven.[87] Whenever ἁρπάζω was used in this way, most likely it also alluded to the supernatural beauty of the victim.

Celebration of (After)Life

A good exemplification of this change of perspective is included in a partly preserved text which has only recently been properly interpreted. It is an inscription with a *post mortem* honorary decree (i.e. a decree similar in character to a consolatory decree, though not one including a consolation per se) from Aphrodisias for a deceased priestess of the imperial cult called Tatia Attalis (start of 2nd century AD?) which includes the description of a specific scene that occurred during the funeral procession:

> Since she has now reached the end of her life, sooner than the destined time, for this reason the city has publicly [lacuna], and everybody unanimously seized her corpse [lacuna]. (transl. A. Chaniotis)[88]
>
> [...] πρόμοι[ρον νῦν τέλος εὗρε] τοῦ βίου, ἐπί τε τούτῳ δημόσιον ἡ πόλι̣[ς πένθος ἐδήλωσεν] ἁρπάσασά τε τὸ πτῶμα ὁμοθυμαδὸν [–].

Extolling her virtues and achievements, the gathered crowd of mourners demanded for the deceased to have a dignified public funeral within the

[86] Currie 2005, 360–362. See also Peterson 1934 and Tabor 1989 for the Christian and Jewish interpretations of the term.

[87] The term was also used for manumission formulas (εἰς ἐλευθερίαν), see *LSJ Supplement* s.v. and Zelnick-Abramovitz 2005, 263–272, 292–300.

[88] Reynolds, Roueché 1992; van Bremen 1996, 156–164; Bielman, Frei-Stolba 1998, 16–19; Strubbe 1998, 65–66; Jones 1999, especially 597–598; Samellas 2002, 190, n. 32; Chaniotis 2006a (see *EBGR* 2006, no. 26; ibidem, 2007, no. 30); Chaniotis 2006b, 219–226. For ἁρπάζω in consolatory decrees, Gottwald 1937, 9, n. 5; Soffel 1974, s.v. ἁρπάζειν (p. 163); Ehrhardt 1994, 48; additional references in *SEG*(44), no. 1691. For *intra muros* burials, Thériault 2003, 248–249.

city limits, in the *heroon* of her grandfather, Adrastos. Physical contact with her body was also meant to emphasise the emotional ties as one would have with a family member; by seizing the body of the deceased (contrary to the law, which usually limited such a μίασμα to the closest family) the citizens demonstrated that the benefactress and the city as a community constituted one family. A. Chaniotis noted that, apart from the notion that the entire city had been orphaned and not just the closest family, the seizing of the deceased's body and such a direct contact with the citizens (by having it buried within the city limits) suggested the supernatural status of the deceased's heroisation. It could have been for this reason that the city authorities ignored the threat of a μίασμα and the tradition of excluding strangers from funerals.[89] In my opinion, one should above all stress the fact that in funerals of the city elite in the Greco-Roman East, the word used to describe the ceremonial climax, the moment when the mourners (the πόλις or the ἔφηβοι) spontaneously seized/carried the bier with the body of the deceased to honour him/her as a hero, was ἁρπάζω.[90] Why was this word used instead of the more neutral ἄγειν or φορεύειν? The point was to allude to heroisation through abduction. The 'abduction' of the deceased by the mourners corresponded to the 'salvational' abductions of the deceased in funerary epigrams. It meant that the deceased avoided the fate of ordinary mortals and acquired the status of a hero. At Tatia Attalis' funeral the mourners, acting in a sense under the influence of love, had the physical impulse to touch and carry the body of the deceased.

Thus, the beauty of the deceased who were abducted by deities themselves to the heavens served purposes other than mere idealisation. In this case the beauty of the deceased was something more than the dramatisation of their loss or preserving the memory of their young age and attractiveness. The deceased who had died in their prime and avoided old age, were granted the privilege of eternal beauty, like that of the mythological

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[89] Another interesting testimony of the physical contact between the bereft and the deceased during burial is an epigram from Piraeus (4th century BC). The deceased Daicrates states that he was buried by the hands of his wife and his children 'without tears,' *Peek GV*, no. 1638; *CEG*(2), no. 586, *EBGR* 2008, no. 13, on p. 220.

[90] See the abduction of Herodes Atticus' body, Philostratus, *Vitae Sophistarum* 2.1: 'Although he died at Marathon and had directed his freedmen to bury him there, the Athenians snatched him away by the hands of the ephebes and carried him to the city, and people of all ages came forth to greet the bier with crying and applause, like children who have lost a good father [...]' transl. J.R. Rife (ἀποθανόντος δὲ αὐτοῦ ἐν τῶι Μαραθῶνι καὶ ἐπισκήψαντος τοῖς ἀπελευθέροις ἐκεῖ θάπτειν Ἀθηναῖοι ταῖς τῶν ἐφήβων χερσὶν ἁρπάσαντες ἐς ἄστυ ἤνεγκαν προαπαντῶντες τῶι λέχει πᾶσα ἡλικία δακρύοις ἅμα καὶ ἀνευφημοῦντες, ὅσα παῖδες χρηστοῦ πατρὸς χηρεύσαντε [...]). See the comments by Rife (2008), 100–101.

heroes and divine stars in heavens.[91] And this was also prefigured in the Homeric ideal of the 'beautiful death'—an early warrior's death in young age which guarantees him eternal glory, perpetual youth and true beauty. Such was the marvellous beauty of the dead Hector admired by the Achaians, or the miraculous attractiveness of Endymion, sleeping his eternal sleep and kissed by moon-goddess Selene herself. Their youth was not seen as a fragile, highly dependent phase of life, one without any achievements, but rather as a form of service, a feat, the culmination of beauty, a flowering in opposition to old age, death and oblivion. The body, in reality emaciated or mutilated, the reason mourners despaired and lamented, was eulogised as an object of beauty and life, something to be contemplated and admired.[92] It could even be offered up as a gift for the gods if they themselves had not earlier decided to take possession of it.[93]

The closely related categories of beauty and youth were therefore a basic premise of poetic, and only sporadically cultic heroisation and apotheosis of the deceased. This was a deep-rooted tradition whose best known feature in the Archaic and Classical periods was the 'heroic' nudity of funerary statues, reliefs and paintings.[94] Compared to these silent and ambiguous items of evidence, funerary epigrams are rich historical sources that to a far greater extent help us understand the role attributed to the beauty of the deceased. They help us understand that in this respect Greek funerary poetry was the continuation of a tradition dating back to the Archaic Period. Looking at this tradition as a whole is a fundamental precondition to understanding the various forms of heroisation of the deceased in the Greco-Roman period. In my view our category of epigrams was deeply rooted in the popular ways of imagining the dead reaching back as far as to Archaic and Classical period.

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91 Steiner 1999, 389, n. 39; Condello 2006.

92 Hoffmann 1992, 342.

93 Ever since the start of the Archaic era Greeks had made a distinction (though they were never entirely consistent in this matter) between ἀγάλματα, i.e. statues of gods, and ἀνδριάντες, i.e. statues of mortals. The former could mean a statue of an actual god (alternatively a deified emperor) or simply a statue dedicated to a god, a votive object that was supposed to please deities. In funerary epigrams of the Archaic Period that was how both the tombs and statues of the deceased were described. But in the Greco-Roman period the meaning of the word ἀγάλματα evolved to be used in reference to the deceased themselves, who with their beauty were offered up to the gods. Regarding ἄγαλμα, see Koonce 1988 and *EBGR* 1988, no. 85; *BE* 1989, no. 250 (study of the term is badly needed); Häusle 1989, 59, n. 82; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 143–147; Scheer 2000, 8–18; Bettinetti 2011, 27–37; Tanner 2001, 264; Chaniotis 2007, 160; Day 2007, 42–46; Calkins 2010, 167–169; for agalmatophilia, Gourevitch 1982.

94 Himmelmann 1990, 35–36, 68–69, 115–116; regarding the South Italian vases, Söldner 2009. For religious interpretation of 'heroic' nudity, van Hall 1942; Hanfmann 1953.

This suggests that there was no strong eschatological streak even in the funerary poetry of the kind seemingly dedicated to expressing the hope of immortality.

And yet this does not alter the fact that in praising the beauty of the deceased much more universally human reflexes could also have been at a factor; the human conviction that what was beautiful, dear and loved could not cease to exist and could not fall into oblivion. A symbol of all this can be the astonishing phrasing of a funerary inscription from Teos (1st century BC) in which the goddesses of grace, beauty and joy gathered over the grave of the Roman citizen Ambivia Myrias to cast aside all symptoms of despair:

> Here is the tomb of Myrias […] while her soul has flown to the Isle of the Blessed.
> Let [no one] cry after her, for the Charites far from her grave
> wailing and ancient laments maintain.[95]

> Μυριάδος τόδε ς[ᾶμα] […]
> ψυχὰς ἐς μακάρων νᾶσον ἀποπταμένας·
> [εἴη] δ' ἀδάκρυτος· χάριτες γὰρ ἀν' ἠ[ρί]α κε[ίνας]
> [ἔ]ργουσιν στοναχὰς καὶ γόον ὠγύγιον.

[95] *Peek GV*, no. 1762; *SGO*(1), 03/06/03. For Χάριτες in funerary epigrams, Wrede 1978, 416–417; Wrede 1981, 49, 113.

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